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PUBLISHING
Printed by PCP, Telford, TF7 4QQ
Telephone 01952 585 585
Distributed by Inter-Media

What Mobile is published 12 times a year

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Tel 01737 457 157
Email *whatmobile@inter-media.co.uk*
Post What Mobile Subscriptions, Intermedia Brand Marketing Ltd, Abbey House, Clarendon Road, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 1QZ

September 2015

Win one of these top phones

The What Mobile Awards 2015 are up and running. We're waiting for your votes to decide which phones, devices, networks and retailers have dominated the technology landscape.

The What Mobile Awards are decided by YOU the readers. Which is why the Awards are so highly regarded by the mobile industry. We know we have to wave a carrot to encourage you to vote. So how about the chance to win one of the world's best smartphones? Every voter will be entered into a prize draw to win either an iPhone 6, Samsung Galaxy 6, HTC M9 or Sony Xperia Z3. You'll have to supply your own SIM card but we hope you'll agree the prize is worth clicking on the voting button at www.whatmobile.net. Categories awaiting your tick-in-the-box are 'best': smartphone, camera phone, value phone, specialist phone, tablet, value tablet, manufacturer, network, MVNO, online retailer, high street retailer. recycling service, insurance provider, customer support, service and repair, wearable device, accessory and Smart Home device/service. Voting should only take a couple of minutes. Good luck. A top smartphone could soon be yours absolutely free.

The What Mobile team

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1 OF 15 PNY POWERPACKS

We've teamed up with our friends at PNY to offer 15 of our lucky readers one PNY PowerPack each. These slim and compact devices are perfect for quickly giving your mobile phone, whether it's Apple, Android, Windows or Blackberry, some extra juice whilst you're on the move. The thin design means you can easily stick it in your wallet, handbag or pockets without it taking up too much room. For a chance to win, just answer the simple question below.

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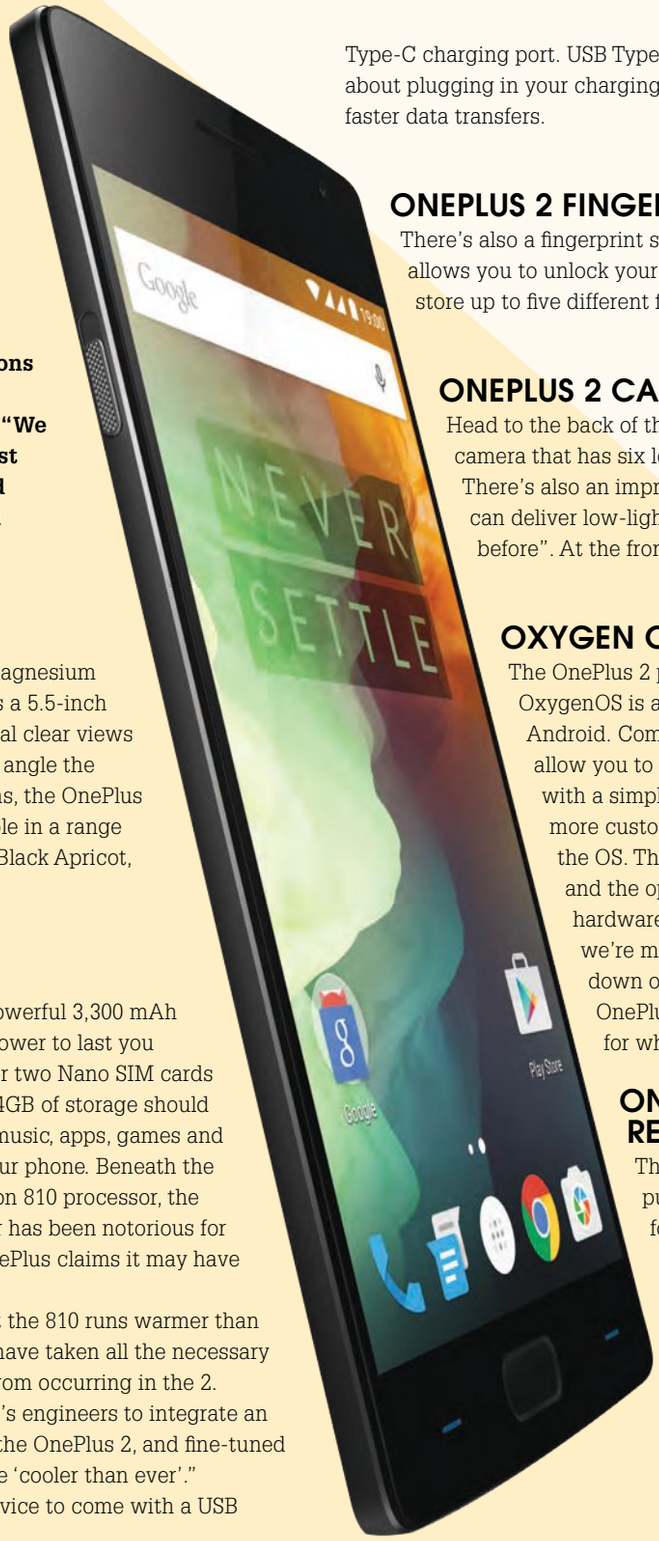
OnePlus 2

The OnePlus 2 has finally launched. OnePlus' latest flagship follows on from the OnePlus One; a phone that owes its success to offering top-of-the-range hardware at a price that undercuts Apple and Samsung.

Keen to emulate the success of the OnePlus One, the OnePlus 2 is another affordable class-topping flagship. Like the OnePlus One, the OnePlus 2 will only be available on an invite-only basis."From day one, we've prioritised our product and our community above all else – we carefully listened to our users' feedback and incorporated suggestions in building the OnePlus 2," said OnePlus founder and CEO Pete Lau. "We chose premium materials, the highest performing components and forward thinking technology to make this an unparalleled user experience."



ONEPLUS 2 DESIGN

The OnePlus 2 comes in an aluminium-magnesium body with stainless steel accents. There's a 5.5-inch display and OnePlus claims it offers crystal clear views in direct sunlight, regardless of whatever angle the phone is held at. Weighing in at 175 grams, the OnePlus 2 is also a lightweight phone. It is available in a range of covers, including wood built Bamboo, Black Apricot, Rosewood and Kevlar.

ONEPLUS 2 HARDWARE

This flagship device also comes with a powerful 3,300 mAh battery, which should provide plenty of power to last you throughout the day. It also has support for two Nano SIM cards with 4G LTE connectivity. A whopping 64GB of storage should also give you plenty of space for videos, music, apps, games and other media you want to download on your phone. Beneath the OnePlus 2's shell is a powerful Snapdragon 810 processor, the fastest processor available. The processor has been notorious for overheating problems in the past, but OnePlus claims it may have solved the issue.

"Although there have been reports that the 810 runs warmer than its predecessors, we assure you that we have taken all the necessary precautions and beyond to prevent this from occurring in the 2. "We worked very closely with Qualcomm's engineers to integrate an improved version of the chipset (v2.1) in the OnePlus 2, and fine-tuned both hardware and software. The 2 will be 'cooler than ever'."
The OnePlus 2 is also the first flagship device to come with a USB Type-C charging port. USB Type C cables means you needn't worry about plugging in your charging cable upside down. It'll also allow for faster data transfers.

ONEPLUS 2 FINGERPRINT SCANNER

There's also a fingerprint scanner and OnePlus claims the scanner allows you to unlock your phone in under half a second. You can store up to five different fingerprints in the device.

ONEPLUS 2 CAMERA

Head to the back of the phone and you'll find a 13-megapixel camera that has six lenses and a powerful dual LED flash. There's also an impressive sensor that OnePlus claims can deliver low-light photographs "like you've never seen before". At the front is a 5 megapixel camera.

OXYGEN OS

The OnePlus 2 pairs OxygenOS with Android Lollipop. OxygenOS is a more streamlined imagining of Android. Complete off-screen gesture controls will allow you to turn the screen on and launch apps with a simple gesture. A built-in file manager and more customisation options are also be built into the OS. There are customisable quick settings and the option to change between software and hardware navigation keys. "With the OnePlus 2, we're making a bet on the future, and doubling down on a holistic product experience," said OnePlus co-founder Carl Pei. "We're excited for what our fans have to say."

ONEPLUS 2 PRICE AND RELEASE DATE

The 64GB OnePlus 2 will be available to purchase with an invite on August 11 for £289. The 16GB version with 3GB of RAM will be available later in the year.

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LG G4 Beat

LG has announced another new addition to its rather bloated smartphone product line-up that aims to fill the gaps below the G4. The problem is, can it differentiate itself? Tom Wellburn reports.

The current LG line of smartphone devices is getting pretty cluttered but the Korean company clearly still thinks there are some areas which need filling in. Sitting somewhere between the LG G4, the Spirit 4G and the G4c, the new LG G4 Beat has some big shoes to fill if it wants any hope of standing out. The device looks to be a step down from the flagship LG G4, offering upper mid-range hardware specs in a scaled back package.

SPITTING IMAGE

Announced in early July, the device will feature a 5.2 inch Full HD IPS display, which puts the pixel density somewhere around 424 pixels per inch. This is a great panel that wouldn't look out of place on some lesser flagships. Interestingly, the display is only slightly smaller than the one found on the LG G4, which is evident in the overall size of the device. Measuring 142 x 73 x 9.9mm, you'd be hard pressed to find any difference between this and its bigger brother. It should be interesting to see how they look side by side, as there really isn't much in it on paper.

WELL-POWERED

The phone features a powerful 1.5GHz octa-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 615, which is a solid mid-range processor with plenty of power for most users. The chip is 4G LTE and 64 bit capable, though the latter won't make much difference due to the inclusion of only 1.5GB RAM. At this tier, it would have been nice to see LG include a little bit extra and push it to 2GB. Still, the battery is pretty decent at 2,300 mAh, which should help it reach a solid day's use.

SOLID SNAPPER

The camera on the Beat is definitely a focal point of the new device, carrying over lots of functionality from the more powerful G4. On the back, you'll be treated to an 8 megapixel sensor which uses LG's exclusive Colour Spectrum Sensor and Laser Autofocus. The excellent manual mode is also carried over from the G4, meaning you'll have total control over your pictures. In a slightly odd move, the Latin American markets will get a 13 megapixel variant that sports an improved rear camera. The front-facing camera is also well catered for, with a 5 megapixel snapper that includes the Gesture Interval Shot feature that accommodates one-handed self-portraits.

PRICE AND AVAILABILITY

The device will ship with the newest version of Android 5.1.1 Lollipop and LG's own UX 4.0 overlay. The overlay is definitely one of the better launchers on the market, with decent performance and less bloatware than some of their competitors. While there's no word on price, we expect it to cost in the region of £250 to £300. No word on when it will reach the UK, though LG has said that the G4 Beat will debut in 'key markets' very soon. You'll be able to pick it up in either Metallic Silver, Ceramic White or Shiny Gold. Definitely one to keep your eye's peeled out for.

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Accessories to add value to your device

01 / Crankmonkey

Price £99

Here's a wind-up. A new portable charger crankmonkey gives instant power or 5V devices by rotating the handle on the portable charger. The crankmonkey can generate enough power to switch on a smartphone and make a call in just 2 minutes. 10 minutes of winding the handle (cranking) can provide up to 6 – 7 hours of light for a Petzl head torch, 20 minutes of talktime on an iPhone 6, and 1 hour of cranking to fully charge up a Go Pro Hero 4.

02 / MyFox Home Alarm and Security Camera

Price £249 (Home Alarm) and £169.99 (Security Camera)

Conventional home security systems are expensive, ugly and fiddly to install. Myfox, a French security company, has a solution that sidesteps these issues. Its latest products - a home alarm and security camera - provide attractive, affordable and simple ways of securing your home. It takes just minutes to install both devices out of the box. Their discreet shapes mean you can easily place both devices on a shelf or coffee table and they won't become an eyesore.

Sensors are used by the alarm to differentiate between loud knocks and a burglar trying to smash your door down. It automatically arms or disarms by detecting the presence of an included key fob, which worked faultlessly. Triggering the alarm produced a siren loud enough to scare off any would-be burglars.

The camera provides a live, high-quality feed of whatever room it's in. The built-in motion sensor is responsive and instantly sends an alert to your phone whenever it detects movement. It has 4x optical zoom and the level of quality and detail, even when fully zoomed in, was crisp and clear.

Combine the alarm with the camera and you've got an intuitive setup that doesn't compromise security for affordability or design.

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03 / Touchjet Pond

£599

Most interactive whiteboards or conventional projectors cost at least £2,000, and that's not including the setup and maintenance costs. The Touchjet Pond easily undercuts the competition at a very affordable £599. It's unique because not only can it turn any flat surface into an interactive screen, it also runs Android 4.4 KitKat out of the box. This means you can download apps from the Google Play Store and interact with them as if the projector were a regular Android smartphone.

04 / Cowin Ark

£149.99

Audiophiles will really love the Ark. This is a two-piece speaker system that combines a detachable sound bar with a powerful sub-woofer bass station. You can detach both speakers to listen to music in different rooms or create a high-quality surround sound experience. The premium metallic body really gives it an upmarket feel as well.

05 / Divoom Voombox Party

£99.99

The Divoom Voombox Party portable speaker is ideal for the beach, the pool or any other outdoor area you want to listen to music this summer. It's water resistant, so you needn't worry about any nearby sea or pool water damaging it. Its powerful speaker means you'll get the best out of the most bass-heavy tunes, whilst Bluetooth and NFC technology lets you easily pair it with most handsets.

06 / PNY 4-in-1 Lens Kit

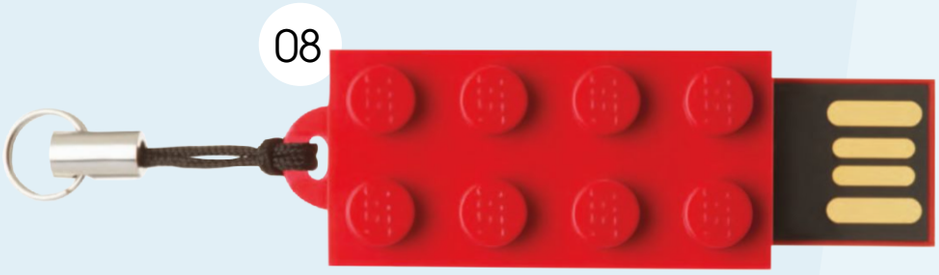
£35.96

One for any professional or amateur photographer alike. This kit comes with four lenses, a super wide angle, fish eye, wide angle and macro lens, to match any professional photographer's setup. Any of these lenses can make your photos appear like they were taken by even the most high quality DSLR camera.

07 / EMFit QS

£191.33

Whether you're a casual runner or professional athlete, sleep is important to aiding performance. It can be hard to track whether you're getting a good night's sleep, however. Simply plonk this discreet device underneath your bed and it will track every hour of your sleep. Then just use your mobile to look at the results and pinpoint nights where you've been getting hardly any sleep, and link them with any potential culprits.



08 / Lego USB flash drive

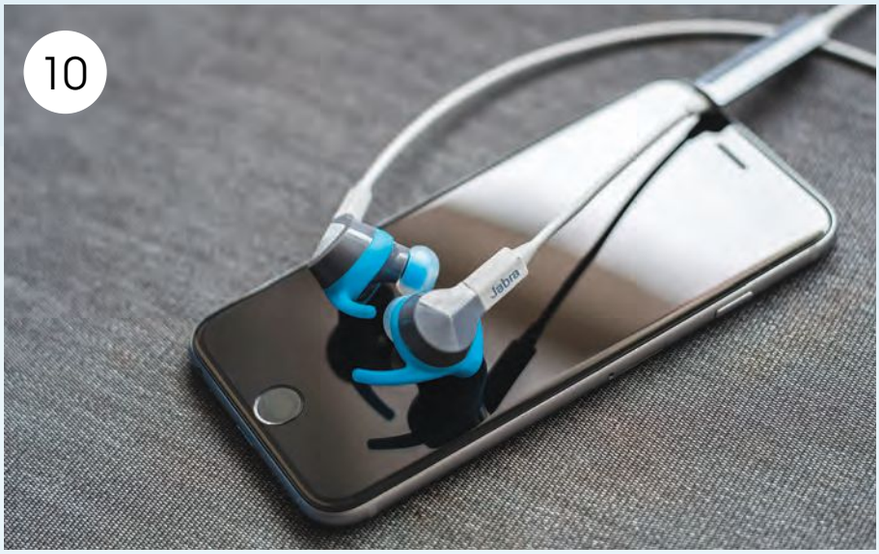
£14.99

Upon first glance this looks like a regular Lego brick. But look more cloesely and you'll discover this is an attractive and useful USB flash drive that can be used to transfer all of your files. It can be easily attached to your keys, whilst a capless sliding design means you can hide the fact that this neat little gadget is a USB device.

09 / PNY Duo-Link

£59.99

The PNY Duo-Link is an incredibly portable solution to transferring files to and from your iPad or iPhone whilst on the go. Its size means you can easily stick it in your pocket, wallet or purse without it taking up too much space. Sizes begin at 16GB, which is plenty of space to store any of your files.



10 / Jabra Sport Coach

£119.99

Just plug the Jabra Sport Coach Bluetooth headphones into your phone and you've got your very own personal trainer. Once paired with an accompanying app, these impressive headphones will give you audio queues on what exercise to do, how many reps are needed and the time needed to complete each one. They're shock and waterproof, which means you can put them through their paces on a run or gym session. Audio quality and fit are both fantastic, so these headphones are a must if you're a fitness fanatic.

WHAT MOBILE AWARDS 2015

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The What Mobile Awards 2015 are here. Tell us which products and services have impressed you most over the past 12 months and be in to win one of the world's top smartphones. We've got an Apple iPhone 6, HTC M9, Samsung Galaxy S6 and Sony Xperia Z3 to give away to say 'thank you' to five lucky voters.

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WHAT MOBILE REVIEWS

This issue's reviews lead with a close look at the Vodafone Smart Tab Prime 6. Packing a number of good features, this budget 4G tablet seems an obvious choice… provided it's on Pay As You Go

"The Vodafone Smart Tab Prime 6 will seem like an obvious choice if you want an affordable 4G tablet"

20/ **Vodafone Smart Tab Prime 6**

24/ **Ultra 6**

26/ **Lumia 640 XL**

30/ **Lumia 435**

How we review

To show you where a device succeeds or fails, we grade each device in five key areas.

Performance
First we fully test the speed and power of each device.

Usability
Next we find out how well the device functions in daily use.

Design
Then we rate the style and quality of the overall design.

Features
What kind of unique features and add-ons does it have?

Final verdict
A rating out of five, balancing cost versus performance.

Editor's choice

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Vodafone Smart Tab Prime 6

Costing just £150 on Pay As You Go and packing in a number of good features, this budget 4G tablet seems an obvous choice. However, first appearances can be deceptive

Price: £150 **Reviewer:** Alex Yau

"You'll soon wish you'd splashed out a little bit extra on a device that does a much better job"

SPEC SHEET

OS Android 5.0.2 Lollipop
Processor Quad-core 1.3GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 410
Screen 9.6 inches
Resolution 1280 x 800
Memory 1GB
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB
Rear camera 5MP
Front camera 2MP
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146 x 244 x 7.9mm
Weight 406g
Battery 4,600mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed	Camera	Battery
3/5	2/5	4/5

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The Vodafone Smart Tab Prime 6 will seem like an obvious choice if you're after an affordable tablet with 4G. After all, it only costs £150 to purchase the device on Pay As You Go, and you can choose how much data you want each month after that initial purchase. It also feels more well built than its retail price suggests, and it packs a good number of features. Closer inspection, however, soon reveals many flaws. Hop onto a Pay Monthly plan and the device can become pretty expensive. Just 1GB of data will cost you £17 per month with a £19 upfront cost. The most expensive option is £31 a month for 8GB of data. This means ownership can skyrocket up to £744 throughout two years if you go Pay Monthly. Pay As You Go is the wisest choice here. There simply aren't enough redeeming features to outweigh the negatives and you'll soon wish you'd splashed out a little bit extra on a device that does a much better job.

Underwhelming – Hearthstone crashed on us for the first time ever during testing

DESIGN

The Smart Tab Prime 6's major strength is its design. Measuring just 7.99mm and weighing just 406g, it is a sleek and light device that feels much more expensive than its price suggests. The screen size measures 9.6 inches, giving you plenty of space to view videos, images, eBooks or whatever else you want to use the device for. A rubber back ensures the device won't slip out of your hands and rounded corners finish off what is a very well-built tablet.

CAMERA

The rear of the tablet has a 5MP camera, which is pretty standard for a tablet these days. It's one of the tablet's weaker points and we doubt you'll get much use out of it. Colours and details were passable but did appear a little off most of the time. HDR mode didn't do much to improve anything, either, which was a shame. The 2MP front camera is equally as lackluster and selfie fans won't be in a hurry to use it.

SCREEN

The Vodafone Smart Tab Prime 6 was ultimately disappointing and where the device's biggest flaws appeared. Yes, the 9.6 inch screen is massive, but the 1280 x 800 resolution didn't really deliver a good enough image quality. Icons, images and text weren't crisp enough and appeared blurry most of the time. This all becomes really obvious when you view videos and most colours looked really washed out and drab. This proves particularly difficult in bright outdoor settings and you'll struggle to see what's on screen.

PERFORMANCE

Performance isn't that great either. The quad-core 1.2GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 410 processor was seriously underwhelming. Gamers will want to avoid this tablet. It struggled to even load Hearthstone and crashed before the game managed to boot

Lacklustre – the front and back cameras are one of the tablet's weak points

Slick – Lollipop 5.0 comes installed

Intensive – gamers will want to avoid this tablet

up the main menu. This is the first time Hearthstone has ever crashed on us when testing a device, which was surprising considering it's not a particularly intensive 2D game. Other 2D games such as Crossy Road and Words With Friends managed to boot up and run without crashing, even though there were some noticeable moments of stutter. We tried to open up more processor intense games like Real Racing 2 and Galaxy on Fire 2 but the tablet crashed within seconds.

Move outside of gaming and the processor is still quite noticeably sluggish. Sites such as Buzzfeed, which are crammed with images and videos, were excruciatingly slow to load up and suffered from noticeable lag throughout our browsing experience.

There is a decent amount of internal storage at 16GB and it also supports 32GB of external storage through microSD cards, which is expected from a tablet at this price.

SOFTWARE

Android Lollipop 5.0, Google's latest Android operating system, already comes installed out of the box and gives the tablet quite a slick-looking skin. Despite our early criticisms about performance, navigating through the tablet is actually quite a simple and straightforward task.

Bloatware is limited to a select few Vodafone apps, the most useful of which being the Vodafone Net Perform app. This lets you monitor how much data you're using and test network speeds. So you can make sure you're not overusing data or see how strong the network in your area really is. My Vodafone will also let you monitor how many minutes, texts or data you've used if you're on a Pay Monthly contract or your remaining credit if you're a Pay As You Go customer.

BATTERY

Battery life is quite decent. A 4,600mAh battery gives the device plenty of usage time and we never struggled to get a day's usage out of the device through moderate usage. Those on long journeys will find little to complain about in the battery life department.

Flip – Bloatware is limited to a few apps

VERDICT

Yes, the Vodafone Smart Tab Prime 6 is one of the most affordable 4G devices on the market but we'd recommend spending a little bit extra on a device that has better software and performance if you can. The screen quality isn't that great on this device and videos, images and icons noticeably lacked the crisp quality that similarly priced devices have. Performance didn't impress either and games such as Hearthstone, which aren't that processor-intense, crashed within seconds of opening. Sure, the tablet does feel a lot more expensive than the cheap price tag suggests and the battery life will suit long-haul travellers. These positives, unfortunately, aren't enough to redeem what is quite an average tablet.

+ Affordable tablet
+ Decent battery life
+ Well-built design

- Screen quality isn't the best
- Can't handle certain games
- Camera isn't the best

OVERALL ★★½☆☆

PERFORMANCE ★★☆☆☆

USABILITY ★★☆☆☆

DESIGN ★★★☆☆

FEATURES ★★★☆☆

Vodafone Smart Ultra 6

With features normally seen on far more expensive models, this budget Pay As You Go handset continues the Vodafone trend of packing a serious punch at a price that won't break the bank

Price: £125 **Reviewer:** Alex Yau

Vodafone has created a reputation for producing well-designed and feature-packed devices that won't massively drain your bank balance. Costing £125, or £17 per month, the Smart Ultra 6 follows this trend and offers a worthy alternative to EE's £200 Harrier.

DESIGN

That £125 price tag gets you a device with features normally seen on more expensive flagship handsets. The 5.5-inch screen is just as large as the LG G4 but the design is ruined slightly by a cheap plastic shell. Vodafone has dressed this up with a shiny trim around the edges, whilst light up buttons create an attractive glow. Its size does make it slightly awkward to hold and fit in your pocket.

There's no removable back, which means the SIM and memory cards are housed in side drawers. The sealed back does make it feel like quite a tough and sturdy device, whilst we had no problem locating and using the volume and power buttons.

CAMERA

Amateur and dedicated photographers will both find something they like about the Smart Ultra 6. Head to the rear and you'll find a very impressive 13 megapixel camera. This is one of the best cameras we've tested on a budget device, with all our photographs appearing crisp, colourful and full of detail.

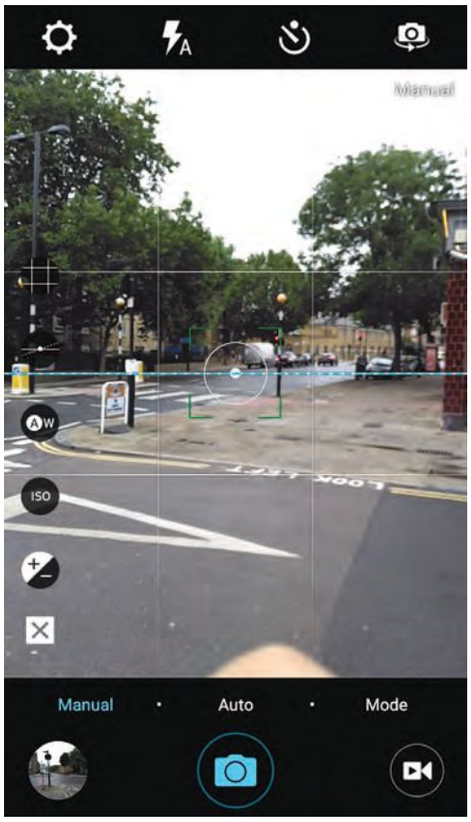
You can take even better photographs by heading into Manual mode. This allows you to adjust white balance, ISO, exposure levels and other features normally found on a DSLR, the standalone camera used by professional

AT A GLANCE

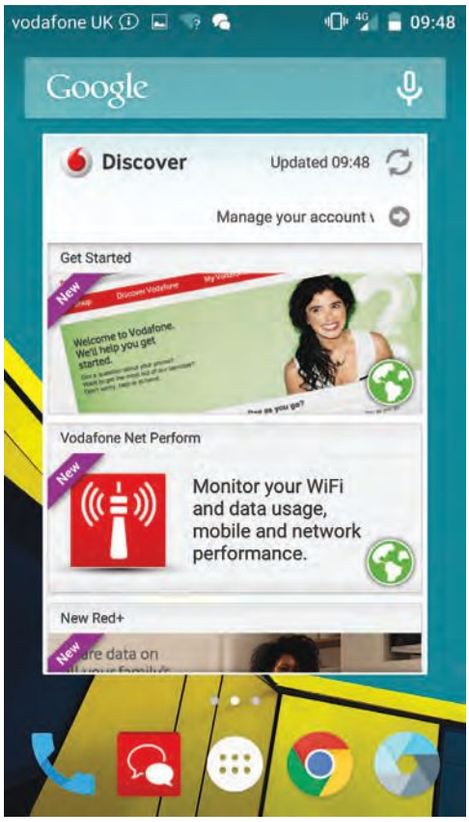
Speed	Camera	Battery
4/5	4/5	4/5

SPEC SHEET

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 615
Screen 5.5 inch
Resolution 1080 x 1920
Memory 2GB
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 5MP
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 154 x 77 x 8.4mm
Weight 159g
Battery 3,000mAh



Impressive – the camera is simple to use



Slick – you get Android Lollipop 5.0 operating system the way that Google intended it

photographers. HDR mode also does a decent job of dressing up your photos, which is perfect when you don't have the time or energy to fiddle around with the various Manual mode settings. The 5 megapixel front camera is also good but is let down by the lack of flash.

The camera app is very simple to use and we had no trouble switching between the various modes or adjusting any of the settings. A variety of filters and shooting modes, including panoramic and multi-exposure, complete what is an excellent camera setup overall.

PERFORMANCE

Performance is where you'll get the most value for money here. An octa-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 610 processor and 2GB of RAM in a phone this cheap is seriously impressive and our tests proved that.

Web browsing was quick and stutter free, especially when we surfed through image and video heavy sites like BuzzFeed. Games like Hearthstone also ran smoothly, whilst there was no noticeable lag when we ran games like Real Racing 3.

There's 16GB of storage, which provides plenty of space for apps, video, music and other media you have. If that isn't enough memory for you, you can expand it up to an impressive 64GB with an external microSD memory card.

SOFTWARE

The Smart Ultra 6 runs Android Lollipop 5.0 out of the box, which means you'll experience Google's latest slick operating system immediately. Vodafone hasn't tampered with the operating system too much, so you'll be getting Lollipop the way it was intended.

SCREEN

The 5.5-inch screen did a great job of making all the colours in games and and HD videos pop out. Everything on screen was full of detail and vibrancy, which you'd expect from a device boasting 1920 x 1080 resolution. The screen also suffered very few issues with glare when we used it outside. Physical buttons are absent, so there's nothing to get in the way of your viewing experience.

BATTERY

Battery life was just as impressive and we easily got a day's use out of it without any struggle. That was through moderate usage of gaming, emailing, WhatsApp and YouTube. On other days where we constantly viewed videos, played games and put it through its paces, we got half a day's battery life, which is still pretty good.

VERDICT

The Vodafone Smart Ultra 6 packs plenty of excellent features you'd normally find on a phone that costs double its £125 Pay As You Go price tag. A brilliant processor, screen that displays everything in crisp full HD detail, fantastic camera and long-lasting battery life makes this handset seriously good value for money. If you're after one of the best value handsets money can buy, the Vodafone Smart Ultra 6 is highly recommended.

+ Fantastic screen
+ Excellent camera
+ Very affordable

- Parts feel cheap
- A bit of bloatware
- Front camera lacks flash

OVERALL ★★★★☆

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆

USABILITY ★★★★☆

DESIGN ★★★☆☆

FEATURES ★★★★☆

Microsoft Lumia 640 XL

Microsoft is back with what could be the company's final smartphone before the launch of Windows 10 Mobile. How does it stack up against similarly priced phablet devices?

Price: £179.99 **Reviewer:** Thomas Wellburn

With Microsoft recently revealing plans to scale back its mobile division in an obvious attempt to lure more third party manufacturers to the Lumia-dominated Windows Phone operating system, it highlights the difficulties faced by a platform with only one true marketable brand. Its decision to cut back the Lumia line to only six phones per year is further evidence of this, with the Redmond technology giant taking an Apple-like stance of quality-over-quantity that will hopefully make them stand out in a crowded marketplace.

The Lumia 640XL could be the swansong of this Windows Phone generation, with the next major release likely coming just before or after the availability of Windows 10 Mobile. It keeps with the company's now defunct marketing method of attacking every possible device range and product line imaginable, which has so far saturated the Windows Phone brand to near drowning point. This device primarily competes with phablet devices around the six inch range, meaning it's got tough competition from the likes of the Apple iPhone 6 Plus and Samsung Galaxy Note 4. However, in typical Microsoft fashion, they've priced the device cheaper, opting to use cold, harsh cash as a way to lure people into the Windows ecosystem. In reality, it should be scared of similar devices like the Asus Zenfone 2.

SPEC SHEET

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2 GHZ Snapdragon 400
Screen 5.7 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 5MP
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 157.9 x 81.5 x 9 mm
Weight 171g
Battery 3,000 mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed	Camera	Battery
3/5	4/5	5/5

DESIGN

Functional and simplistic are words I would use to describe the Lumia 640 XL. The Microsoft devices certainly have a unique appeal about them but rarely set the world alight with space-age materials and paper-thin slimness. Polycarbonate plastics make up the majority of the device, with an all-glass front comprised of cornering Gorilla Glass 3. It's a design theme that you will notice through most of the Lumia line and you'll either love it or hate it. There's a bit of déjà vu in the Lumia 640 XL, as you could be forgiven for thinking it was a standard Lumia 640. The only major difference is the size, in which the 640 XL dwarfs its little brother.

At 9mm thick it's not the slimmest device in the world, though the curved edges help to make it feel a lot smaller than it actually is. With a 5.7 inch display, it's also smaller than most other phablets on the market which tend to float around the 6 inch mark. Still, it does feel quite bulky and wide, with my hands struggling to grip the thing comfortably at times. The speaker vent has been moved from its original position on the Lumia 640 and now resides next to the camera sensor, a much better placement that doesn't result in your hands smothering the sound in landscape mode.

As is typical with other Lumia devices, you get plenty of colour options to choose from. The back panel is removable, allowing you to easily switch things up and access the microSD/ sim card slot. There's also QI wireless charging as standard, which is a nice feature if you have the required peripherals to use it. The Lumia 640 XL is available in a mix of both matted and glossy variants. As always, we reckon you should opt for the former, which is far less likely to become a fingerprint magnet.

Big brother – the only difference from the standard Lumia 640 is its size

Trump card – the 13 megapixel camera

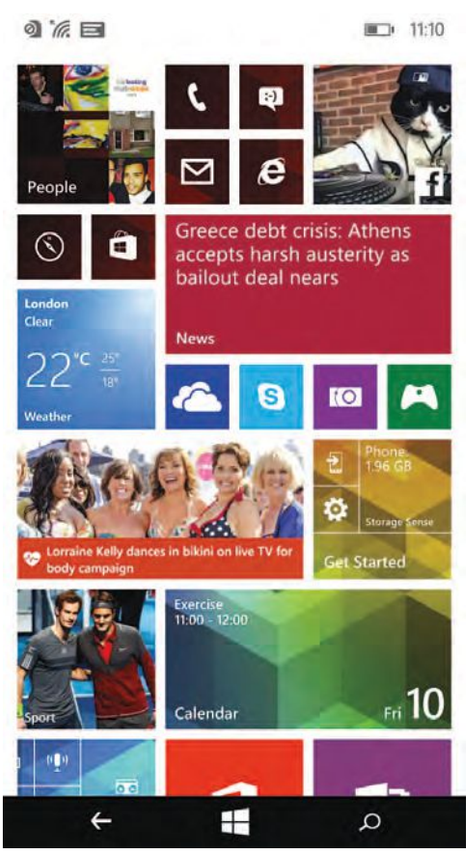
CAMERA

The camera on the Lumia 640 XL is a trump card that manages to take some very good images for the price. With a 13 megapixel sensor and Carl Zeiss optics, there is a notable increase in image detail over the standard Lumia 640. It still doesn't excel in low-light and it does struggle with a bit of noise, but even these are all acceptable compromises given the price. In well-lit conditions, the camera even manages to challenge the more expensive Lumia 830, showing just how good Microsoft's camera tech has gotten across the range.

The 5 megapixel front camera is also equally impressive for such an inexpensive device, providing a good amount of detail in well-lit conditions. With 1080p 30fps support for both this and the rear camera, those who enjoy Skype calling and Instagram should quite happy with its ability to take selfies and video.

SCREEN

The Lumia 640 XL has a large 5.7 inch panel with a middling 1280 x 720 HD resolution. At this size, that equates to only 258 pixels-per-inch. In the days of Full HD panels and 300+ DPI resolutions, it'll be a little disappointing to some people. Pixilation is evident up close and jagged edges can be clearly seen around lettering and images. It's likely that a Full HD panel would've bumped up the cost a fair amount, so it's understandable that Microsoft went for a generic display at this price point. On the plus side, the panel itself is a very high quality IPS display, with no colour



Interface – Windows Phone is well optimised

deviation even at extreme angles. It also has a really impressive maximum brightness, making colours literally pop out of the screen.

You get the proprietary ClearBlack built into the panel, which is a technology previously developed by Nokia to enhance dark contrast and colours. By using three special layers within the panel, it helps to increase sunlight readability and colour reproduction by reflecting unwanted light away from your face. Imagine it as a pair of sunglasses for your smartphone screen.

PERFORMANCE

Although the device is bigger and more expensive than the 640, it uses exactly the same quad-core 1.2GHZ Snapdragon 400 processor as its little brother. It's a little disappointing and it would've been nice to see a Snapdragon 610 make an appearance. Still, the processor is partly one of the reasons it has managed to keep the device so cheap. Thankfully, Windows Phone is so well optimised that even lower-spec hardware feels quick and speedy, with little lag when navigating the user interface.

Responsiveness was almost identical to the Lumia 640 we reviewed last issue, with only a slight delay in opening apps and impressive gaming performance. Playing Asphalt 8: Airborne was a buttery smooth experience, with a near consistent frame-rate. Obviously, detail settings are dialled back somewhat versus the Android flagship counterparts but the loss is only minimal. I'd take that over a low frame-rate any day. As an added bonus, the device remained ice cool during the entire 45 minute session.

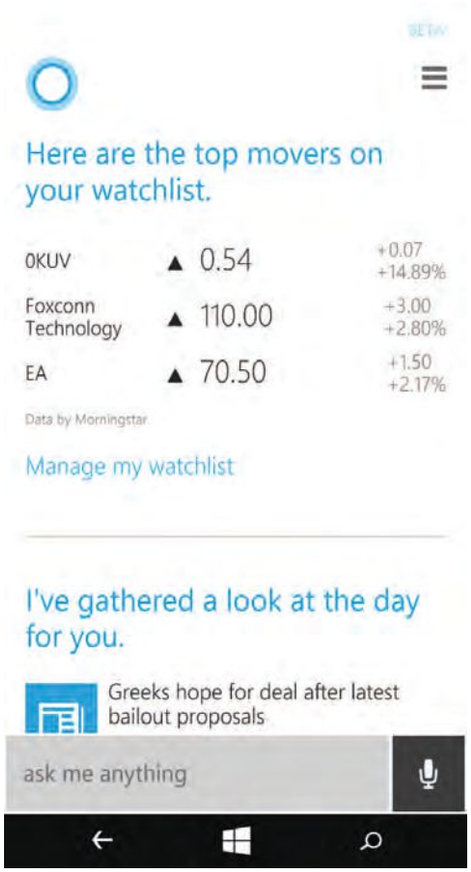
Big screen – the 640 XL has a 5.7 inch panel

SOFTWARE

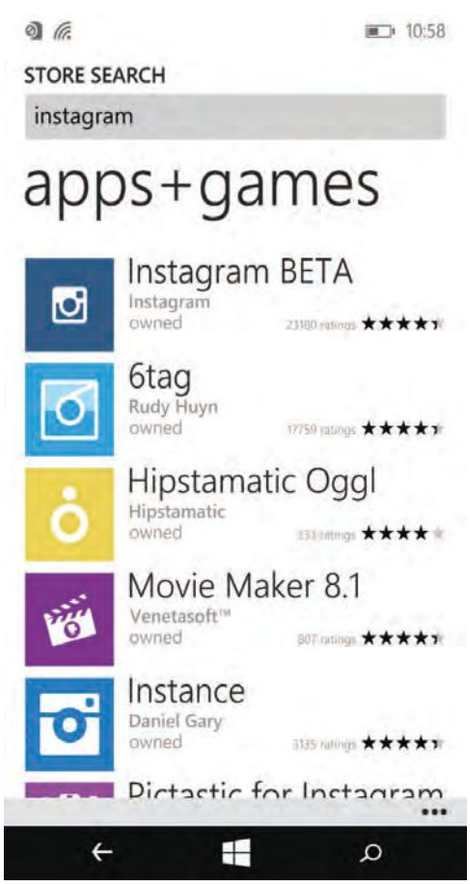
Running on Windows Phone 8.1 Update 2 with Lumia Denim, it brings some notable updates to the unique operating system. The settings menu has undergone an overhaul, with everything now clearly labelled and much easier to access. Live tiles can now be grouped into folders, helping to unclutter an otherwise congested home screen. Things such as independent volume controls and a dedicated notification centre make a welcome return, which help to complement the unique live tile experience. Glance has also got an improvement, showing health and fitness information while the phone is sleeping plus weather updates. As always, we recommend using this feature with an OLED display to reduce battery drain.

The OS has also gained its own dedicated voice assistant, Cortana, which sits somewhere between Google Now and Siri in functionality. The service will be making the jump to Android and iOS in July, so it will probably be available at the time you're reading this. Google is still light-years ahead of the competition when it comes to sheer data but Cortana has some unique abilities itself that helps to give some identity. The ability to act as a secretary and set appointments or reminders is a handy tool. It also has a home page which acts as a hub for all your news, appointment information and locations, handy if you need to check your schedule at a glance.

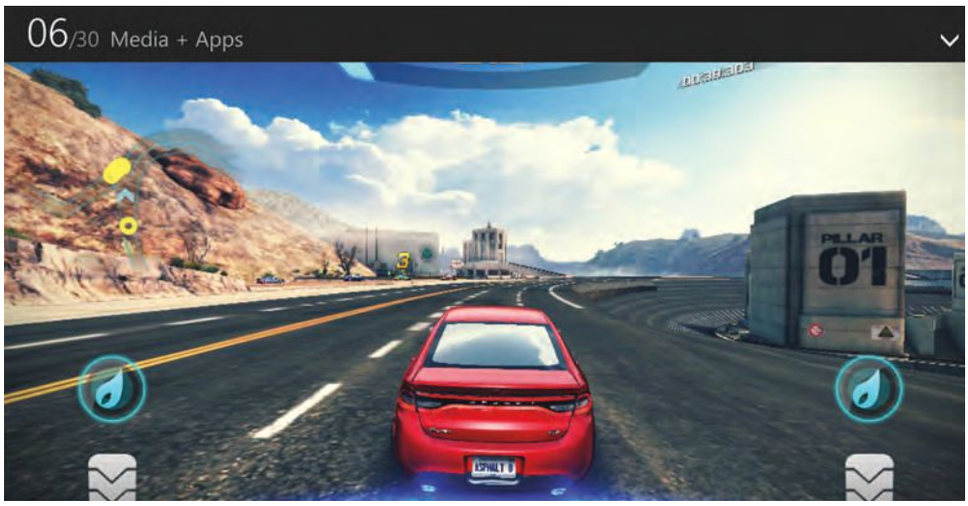
You'll also get a year's free subscription to Office 365 worth £59.99, which gives you Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook, plus 1TB of OneDrive cloud storage. As we stress every time a Windows device gets reviewed, the operating system is still struggling to attract third party applications with a poor selection currently available. Many of the official apps such as Facebook and Instagram are pretty dire versus their Android/ iOS counterparts, though in some cases there are viable alternatives within the store which offer a better experience. It's a shame too, as those which do put in the effort really show how great the OS can look and feel.



Functionality – Cortana voice assistance



Applications – store offers alternatives



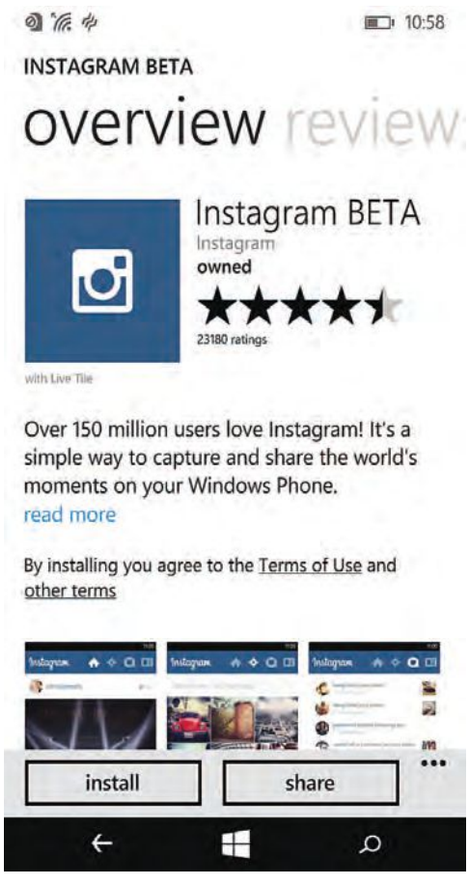
Responsive – playing Asphalt 8: Airborne was a smooth experience

BATTERY

The Lumia 640 XL has a monstrous battery that you'll be hard pressed to find on devices with six inch screens, let alone 5.7 inch variants. At 3000mAh, it puts most competitors to shame and easily reaches one and a half days of relatively heavy usage. Even gaming proved to be no match for its huge battery, sipping only about 7-10% after a good 45 minutes on Asphalt 8: Airborne. Under normal usage, you should have little problem getting the device beyond the two day mark. It also has a fully removable battery, which is another huge positive. If you're ever out on a long camping trip but need to keep in touch, it's far easier to bring a spare battery than lug around a powerbar. Other phone manufacturers would do well to follow in its shoes.

CONCLUSION

There's very few bad things to say about this device considering the price and features that you get for the money. It's got an excellent screen that could perhaps do with being a higher resolution and a processor that's a little on the slow side but still capable given the speedy Windows OS. Aside from this, both cameras are very good and the overall design is sturdy if a little bulky.



Official apps – there's a poor selection

Windows 10 Mobile

Windows 10 Mobile is Microsoft's upcoming smartphone operating system that will introduce a unified experience across smartphones, tablets and PCs. The company has the ambition of creating one platform for all devices, something which we can already see happening with the introduction of Universal Apps in Windows Phone 8.1.

Microsoft is promising a lot of exclusive features in the new OS, including the ability to plug your device into a TV and see it dynamically scale into a full desktop-like experience. It will also offer new tools for developers that make it incredibly easy to port iOS and Android apps to Windows Mobile, a service that the company hope will improve the current app store situation. It's due to be released later this year and Windows Phone 8 users will be entitled to the upgrade for free. The only catch is that you'll need 1GB ram to get the full experience it has to offer.

VERDICT

Although it's slightly more expensive than the standard Lumia 640, you still get a considerable amount of goodies for your money. With a rear camera that closely matches the Lumia 830 in daytime conditions and a generously sized screen that is perfect for Netflix on-the-go, there's plenty to like about this device. It's just a shame about the underpowered processor and somewhat bulky design. Still, at this price-point, you shouldn't expect flagship performance. In this case, the Lumia 640 XL is still a very good device.

+ Decent display
+ Excellent battery life
+ Solid camera

- Poor app store
- Slow processor
- Slightly bulky

OVERALL ★★★★½

PERFORMANCE ★★★½☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★½☆
FEATURES ★★★★☆

Microsoft Lumia 435

Microsoft's cheapest handset to date costs a mere 40 quid in some UK retailers. Does it have what it takes to surprise us, or will the price reflect its performance?

Price: £40.00 **Reviewer:** Thomas Wellburn

With the Lumia 640 and 640XL taking up the majority of our time recently, we decided to carry on the theme with an ever cheaper device. If you think that £109.99 is cheap for a Lumia 640, Microsoft can go lower. The Lumia 435 is the company's cheapest device ever released, coming in at a miniscule £40 in some retailers. For that price, you'd be lucky to buy a dumbphone, let alone a smart one. It really has no competition when it comes to the cost but is it actually usable? Let's see.

DESIGN

In a familiar polycarbonate design, the Lumia 435 looks like most other devices from the range aside from some minor differences. Microsoft has opted to give this device a sharper feel, with zero curved edges aside from the corners. It actually feels pretty comfortable to hold and does a good job of resisting fingerprints thanks to the matte finish. You could easily be forgiven for thinking it cost more, such is the deceptive quality of the aesthetics.

With an overall thickness of 11.7mm, it's definitely comparable to a brick. That said, it helps to give a nice grip in your hand and you'll never forget where it is. The other dimensions are much quainter, at only 118.1 x 64.7. It's tiny size and minimal features help to give it a weirdly endearing appearance. While I wouldn't call it premium, it's certainly cute.

On the side you get volume keys and a power button but no dedicated camera shutter, as is expected from a non-Pureview device. The rear cover is easily removed to reveal a 1,560mAh and sim tray (a dual sim version is also available). The device also has a microSD slot which can take up to 128GB of SDXC memory, a very nice addition for the price.

CAMERA

With a 2 megapixel camera, don't expect it to win many awards for picture quality. I'll try my best to be lenient here due to the bargain-bin pricing but the camera is still pretty bad. Low-light is noisy and there is a lack of auto-focus, meaning it's difficult to get sharp images. Daytime images are passable, though they lack the colour range and definition to really make them pop.

The front camera is only VGA, which is almost like stepping through a time portal. It's a noisy, blurred mess that looks incredibly soft and

SPEC SHEET

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHZ dual-core Snapdragon 200
Screen 4.0 inches
Resolution 800 x 480 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Rear camera 2MP
Front camera VGA
Video 480p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 118 x 65 x 11.7 mm
Weight 131g
Battery 1,560 mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed	Camera	Battery
3/5	2/5	3/5

Camera – don't expect to win many awards

Game on – frame drops occurred when the action got heated in Halo: Spartan Assault

really isn't much use for anything aside from the odd video call. Again, there's little room to be complaining for 40 quid. It's worth bearing in mind that most phones at this price-point don't even come with a front camera, so don't take it for granted.

SCREEN

The Lumia 435 uses a 4-inch LED TN panel, which is a far cry from the IPS displays found on most modern smartphones. Viewing angles tend to be very poor with TN panels and it's immediately evident here, with very obvious colour deviations and contrast changes at obtuse angles. I did notice that viewing the phone from a side doesn't seem to produce as much of a negative effect as viewing it from above.

The resolution is also very low at only 800 x 480 pixels. This equates to roughly 233 pixels per inch, which is far below the threshold for the average human eye. As such, pixilation is slightly evident at normal viewing distances, though it's not hardly as bad as I expected. There's also a decent level of colour reproduction which helps to overshadow some of the panels shortcomings. It just so happens that the minimal design of Windows Phone is also well suited to low resolution screens.

PERFORMANCE

The device uses a 1.2 GHz Snapdragon 200 processor, which is only an entry-level dual core chip. The performance reflects this, with some apps opening slower than usual and loading times taking a noticeable few seconds too long. Browsing the user interface and opening utility apps such as the alarm was still pleasingly speedy, with little lag between initial input and result.

My usual benchmarking game of Asphalt 8: Airborne refused to play on the Lumia 435, bringing up a strange internet connection error. I decided to try the next best title I could think of and downloaded Halo: Spartan Assault instead. It actually ran pretty well overall, with the only frame drops occurring when the action got a little heated. The 1,560 mAh battery may not sound much on paper but thanks to the low-end Snapdragon, I was almost able to get a day of solid use before it brought up the warning message.

SOFTWARE

The Lumia 435 uses the latest version of Windows Phone 8.1, though it doesn't get the Lumia Denim update due to hardware constraints. The OS has really matured over the past year and it shows in some of the features now available. It's almost able to match Android and iOS when it comes to the core functionalities, although it's fair to say that some of those are not quite as robust versus the competition.

The app store still holds it back, with a poor selection of Triple-A third party applications. Snapchat is completely absent and Instagram only exists in a neglected BETA form. Even the official Facebook app from Microsoft struggles to match iOS and Android. If it wasn't for committed third party Windows Phone developers such as Rudy Hyun making viable alternatives to these, the store would be a dire place indeed.

VERDICT

For 40 quid, you'd do well to get anything close to this on competing platforms. While the camera is poor and the screen is pretty mediocre, you're still getting a fully functioning smartphone that runs the Windows Phone OS to a passable standard. While it does show its limitations in some places, I was surprised how fluid the experience was on such a low-end device. I'm still not sure if this says more about the OS than the device itself.

+ Mostly fluid experience
+ Front facing camera
+ Surprisingly solid design

- Poor rear camera
- Mediocre screen
- Sluggish at times

OVERALL ★★★☆☆

PERFORMANCE ★★★½☆

USABILITY ★★★★☆

DESIGN ★★★☆☆

FEATURES ★★★☆☆

Windows 10 *Test Drive*

Microsoft's new Windows 10 Mobile could redefine the struggling operating system within the mobile sector when it arrives on its rumoured October release date. With a scalable user interface and more, just how good is it shaping up? Tom Wellburn investigates Build 10149.

Microsoft is betting a lot on Windows 10. The Redmond company has placed its entire future vision on the basis of a fully integrated, scalable Operating System that can be applied to any device regardless of size. With the desktop version of Windows 10 quickly nearing completion, I decided to take the plunge and jump onto the mobile bandwagon. Microsoft has been offering early access to the software for some time through the Windows Insider Program, though previous builds were far too buggy to be considered usable in the long-term. With Windows 10 Mobile slated for a rumoured October release date, I decided to test drive the software for an entire month and see if it was up to scratch. Risky? Incredibly. Let's see how it goes.

Installation and first impressions

Downloading the software was straightforward. You sign up for a free developers account through the Microsoft website before downloading the insider app on your phone.

After this you're asked if you want to join the 'slow ring' or 'fast ring'. Those who choose the former will get updates less often but they will likely be more stable. I jumped in at the deep end and chose fast ring. The phone then proceeded to do the usual stuff, downloading and installing the update with very little issue. After about 45 minutes or so I was ready to try Windows 10. The build that I downloaded was 10149, which was said by many online to be the most stable yet. Some even said it should be possible to use it every day.

MODERN FEEL

When the phone rebooted I was treated to the brand-spanking new Windows 10 OS, which I must admit had me impressed. It has a far more modernised feel than Windows Phone 8.1, which is in part thanks to the full screen background and closer live tile arrangement. Icons are now far sharper and slimmer than previous versions, with a completely new settings menu that is far easier to understand. The notifications section is also much better, with in-line responding to text messages now possible through toasts and the action centre.

Talking of the Action Centre, that has also undergone a substantial improvement, with more quick action icons and better handling of bulk notifications. No more cascading lines of app notifications that will clog up your screen!

The phone continued to download my apps in the background while I browsed the new interface and it also carried across my previous live tile arrangement from Windows Phone 8.1.

SMOOTH OPERATOR

The first thing to catch my eye was the overall speed of the operating system. Windows Phone 8.1 has always been a very smooth OS that runs well on low-end hardware. It is one of the most proud features that it can cry home about. Windows 10 Mobile already feels on a par with its predecessor, so it should be interesting to see just how much faster it can get. While browsing through the interface was quick and speedy, apps did tend to hang. Splash screens stuck around for a little bit longer than I would've liked, which took away from the overall responsiveness of the user interface.

Applications

Most of the Microsoft applications were updated to their Windows 10 variants. Currently unavailable to the public, they represent the new design themes that will be a commonplace within the new OS. My first thought was 'Oh god, why the hamburger menus?', but I soon got over it. The first party apps now look fantastic, which is a far cry from Windows 8.1. While the Bing applications were good, the design themes in things such as the email and calendar apps were bland at best. Now they look stunning. There's also a lot more features in them, with landscape support and the ability to flag/archive mail at the flick of a finger.

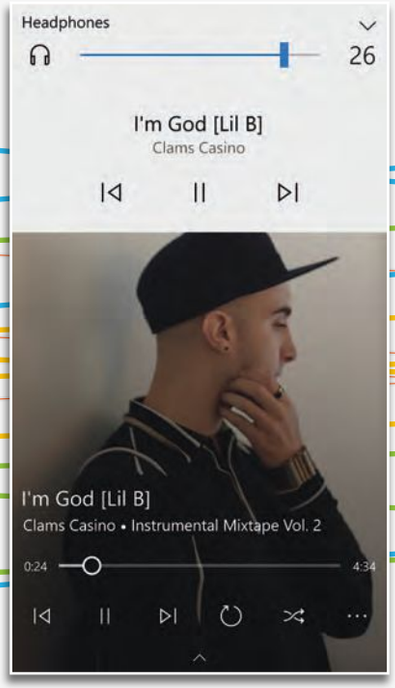
Microsoft purchased Acompli, a popular email application for iOS and Android, several months ago and it's clear that the design themes have been carried over for Outlook in Windows Mobile 10. In many ways it feels like the exact same application besides some of the icons and logos. This is not necessarily a bad thing. I did find the overall mailbox system a little awkward, as switching between accounts was slower than in Windows Phone 8.1. Individual inboxes can be pinned to the start screen but currently the live tiles don't work, meaning you can't see your message count. A little disappointing. On a positive note, the mail and calendar apps are now completely integrated, giving a nice interaction between the two. Everything in the calendar works the same as in the previous version of Windows, it's just that now it's a lot more visually striking.

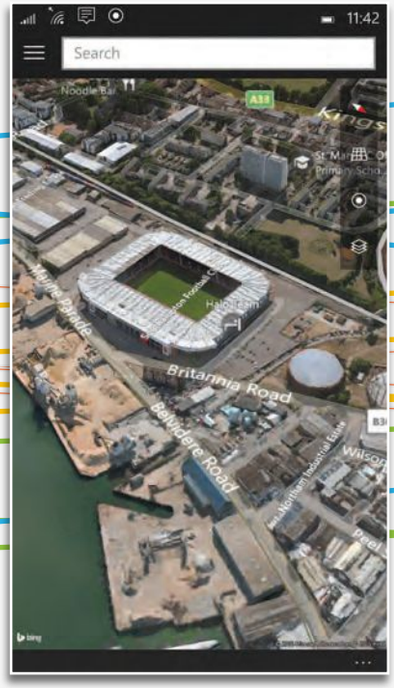
APPS UPDATED

The photo and music apps have also received big updates in line with the new design themes. Anybody who used the music application on Windows Phone 8.1 will remember what a disaster it was, with an unimaginable amount of bugs hampering the experience. Microsoft was so embarrassed that they assigned a special team of developers to release bi-weekly updates in effort to improve the app. Even now, it's still not up to scratch when compared to the previous version in Windows Phone 8.0. Thankfully, this new version is a lot better, with a much improved interface and easier navigation.

Artists, songs and playlists are now neatly organised in a sidebar that is easily accessed by hitting a hamburger button at the top of the screen. The now playing section is much easier to understand, with a scrub feature that doesn't need baby fingers to use. The artist backgrounds for the now playing also seemed to render much better, with the app recognising much more artists than in previous versions. The only disappointment was the lack of a live tile but I would expect that the

Applications





feature will make an appearance in later builds. Microsoft Edge was present in this build, which is the new web browser set to replace Internet Explorer. I'd like to say it felt better but I couldn't really tell the difference. The app suffered from a strange hanging issue where it wouldn't navigate to a requested URL. The only option was to close and reopen the application until it came back to life. On the few times I could get it working, it certainly felt smooth. It had a few issues formatting certain websites (such as our own What Mobile), choosing to zoom out and display the full page.

In terms of speed, there was no complaints. Image heavy websites like IGN instantly sprung to life with no delay or stuttered loading, which is excellent for a mobile browser.

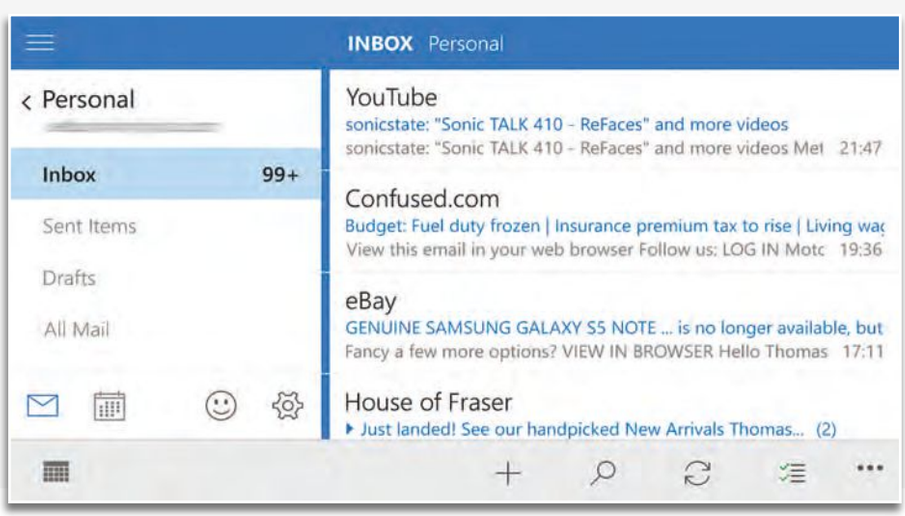
INCREASED FUNCTIONALITY

The Maps application is another highlight, jumping ahead of HERE to offer much more functionality. There's now a street view option, plus an awesome 3D Cities option which allows you to view a select few destinations in full three dimensions. It is worth noting that the 3D city viewer is extremely intensive and my Lumia 830 was really struggling to run it. Also, all of the included cities are mostly in the United States with only one currently available in the UK. No, it's not London… It's err, Southampton? Overall navigation isn't that much different to HERE Maps, as they both share the same maps database.

On top of the major applications, Microsoft has also updated all of the utility apps to coincide with the new design themes. Calculator, podcasts, voice recorder, alarms, Store, OneDrive and the People Hub have all undergone positive changes, looking far better visually than their predecessors. The People Hub is now more like a contacts book than anything else, with Microsoft dropping support for the Rooms feature that made it unique. You still have the ability to aggregate social media news feeds and view them in a ticker style format for each contact, though it's a little buggy in this build and some apps that used to work with it now don't.

PEOPLE SEARCH

Possibly the biggest addition for the People Hub is the addition of a search bar. Finally, we can at least search for contacts by name! The visual redesign of the Store is also better, looking much closer to the desktop version. At the time of testing, it was still in BETA and did feel a little slow at times though it should be finalised by the next build. There's also a fully-fledged file explorer included in the build, which is a welcome addition.



My personal experiences

In using the device for a month, I documented a few issues that cropped up and caused some serious problems with my experience. Notably in the first week I had two catastrophic crashes where a hard reset was the only option. The first crash completely froze my phone, meaning I had to use the recovery tool and do a complete restore. Thankfully, the process was relatively straightforward though I did lose everything stored on the device.

ONGOING ISSUE

The second major crash came after a slew of background app updates which rendered my device useless. All of the apps would suddenly bring up an error message and refuse to open, meaning the only option was a hard reset. An ongoing issue that has also been reported by Microsoft is a problem with the messaging application, of which I have consistently been affected. Even after several resets, I still can't get my ingoing and outgoing texts to deliver correctly. Apparently, this is due to a bug with the Gmail account integration, of which I use several for my emails.

TRIAL AND ERROR

I also had frequent issues with the Store applications, which was probably due to Microsoft's decision to include both the old Store application and the new Store app. Downloading and updating applications was incredibly sporadic, with some refusing to install from the new Store and some refusing to install from the old. It was a case of trial and error to get some to download, meaning I wasted masses of data on failed background updates and installs. It was at that point that I decided to turn off automatic updates and force them myself. Even this failed to solve the issue.

These were the main issues that I faced, but they were far from the only things that happened. App glitches were a common occurrence, though not as frequent as I expected. Facebook Messenger failed on me several times, needing a few reinstalls to function correctly. Combine this with the app stores issues outlined above and you have a recipe for disaster.

There was also occasions where the phone would hang on the lockscreen, giving a blank screen. Repeated presses of the lock key until it started working again were the only way to get around it. Notifications would come through later than expected at times and my appointment didn't work until about two week in when it suddenly sprung to life. Then there was the formatting bugs, which is likely due to the scaling feature found in Windows 10. As an OS that is designed to dynamically scale to any device format and screen size, I can sympathise that such a feature is a mammoth undertaking with lots of work needed. Still, to see the settings screen bloat to four times its size at random intervals was still quite a funny sight to behold.

Can we use it as a daily driver? Almost!

Now we come to the ultimate question, is it ready for daily use? While I'd love to say yes, it's still got a little way to go before I would consider throwing it on my Lumia 830 full-time. It's come leaps and bounds from previous builds, which were buggy as hell and full of unfinished applications. There's also a much more clear design theme, as evident by the direction which most of the first party apps are now taking. In previous versions, it felt somewhat like patchwork quilt, with user interface inconsistencies everywhere that amounted to a confusing experience. Now we are at a stage where we can really see the fruits of Microsoft's labour starting to pay off. In terms of the UI, I would argue that it is probably fairly close to the final version and doesn't need much work. The only major problem lies in the bugs and it's something that will continue to improve as the months pass. If it wasn't for the occasional crashes and irritating glitches, I would've adopted this as my daily driver immediately. The overall speed of the thing is excellent and in a few builds time I can definitely see this reaching a polished stage where my opinion will change entirely.

POWER YOU CAN BANK ON

A LIFE SAVER WHEN YOUR BATTERY DIES, POWER BANKS OFFER A SIMPLE SOLUTION TO SHORT BATTERY LIFE. BUT WHAT TYPE SHOULD YOU GO FOR? WE PUT A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT MODELS THROUGH THEIR PACES.

It's all happened to us before. You're playing Candy Crush on your commute home, trying to WhatsApp your friends or using Google Maps to head to a new location and the screen goes black. The battery's just died and your phone has been rendered useless. Short battery life seems to be a common issue with modern smartphones and many companies have been trying to come up with ways to remedy this problem. A simple solution is the power bank. Power banks are devices which transfer juice into your smartphone to give it more energy. These can be life savers if you find your phone running worryingly low on battery life halfway throughout the day.

But there's more to consider than just popping into a phone shop and picking up any old power bank. You'll have to consider how much mAh it stores. The more mAh a power bank's battery can store, the more energy it can transfer into your smartphone. So a power bank that can store 2,600mAh in its battery can transfer more juice to a phone than a power bank that stores 2,000mAh. There's also the design. Some power banks are larger than others. The heavyweight power banks normally have room to charge more than one device at the same time, so it's worth considering whether the power bank matches your own lifestyle. What power bank should you go for? We tested a number of power banks to see if size does matter and whether a smaller power bank is just as good as a larger one.

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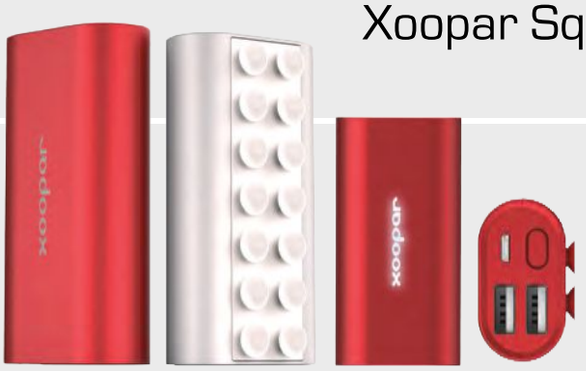
Xoopar Squid Mini 5.200mAh Dual USB Power Bank

Price: £24.99 **mAh:** 5,200



We've got no complaints about the amount of power this power bank stores – it has enough power to quickly charge two devices at once or an iPhone twice over – but the design has let it down. It is not as compact as most other power banks in our test and the suction cups, used to attach the power bank to the back of your phone and create a makeshift stand, seemed a little bit gimmicky.

EE Power Bar

Price: Free (or £20 for non-EE customers) **mAh:** 2,600

The EE Power Bank gets points for having one unique feature none of the other power banks have: once it runs out of juice, you can head into an EE shop and swap it for a fully-charged one free of charge. This means you needn't have to wait ages charging up the power bank up when it's empty, and it packs a decent amount of juice too.

Olixar 5,000mAh Power Bank **Price:** £29.99 **mAh:** 5,000

Upon first glance this power bank looks just look a black slab. But look more closely and you'll discover it is a versatile device that can quickly charge both Android and Apple devices. Compartments to store various cables makes this one of the more discreet and attractive power banks on our list, whilst an LED indicator tells you how much energy is left in the power bank.

PNY Powerpack T2600 **Price:** £10.99 **mAh:** 2,600

A power pack that's both very well-designed and does a fantastic job of charging up your phone. We got an impressive 1 per cent of charge every minute, but it's let down by the fact that it doesn't store enough energy to fully charge your device. It's compact cylindrical design means you can easily stick it in your bag, purse or pocket without it taking up too much space.

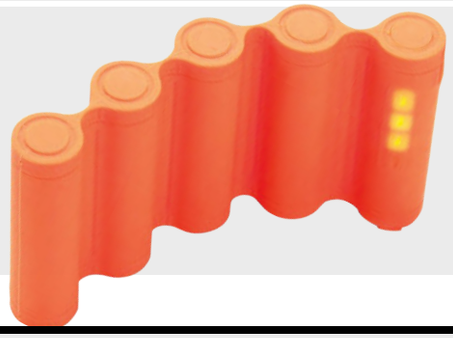
Olixar Charge & Sync Micro USB Power Bank
Price: £9.99 **mAh:** 1,500

The compact design of this power bank makes it one of the most portable in our list. You can easily wrap and store the device's USB cable discreetly inside the device, eliminating any unsightly cables or the likelihood of losing any microUSB leads. It doesn't store as much juice as the other power banks, unfortunately, which means you're unlikely to get a full charge from this power bank.

Linearflux LithiumCard Portable Power Bank
Price: £29.99 **mAh:** 1,200

This little power bank really impressed us with its size. The thin credit card-sized shape meant we could easily stick it into our wallet, whilst the metallic design made it feel much more rugged than the plastic-bodied power banks we tested. A kevlar-reinforced charging cable means you'll have no worries of any frayed wires. You'll also get a decent number of additional hours from using this device, too; five hours to be precise.

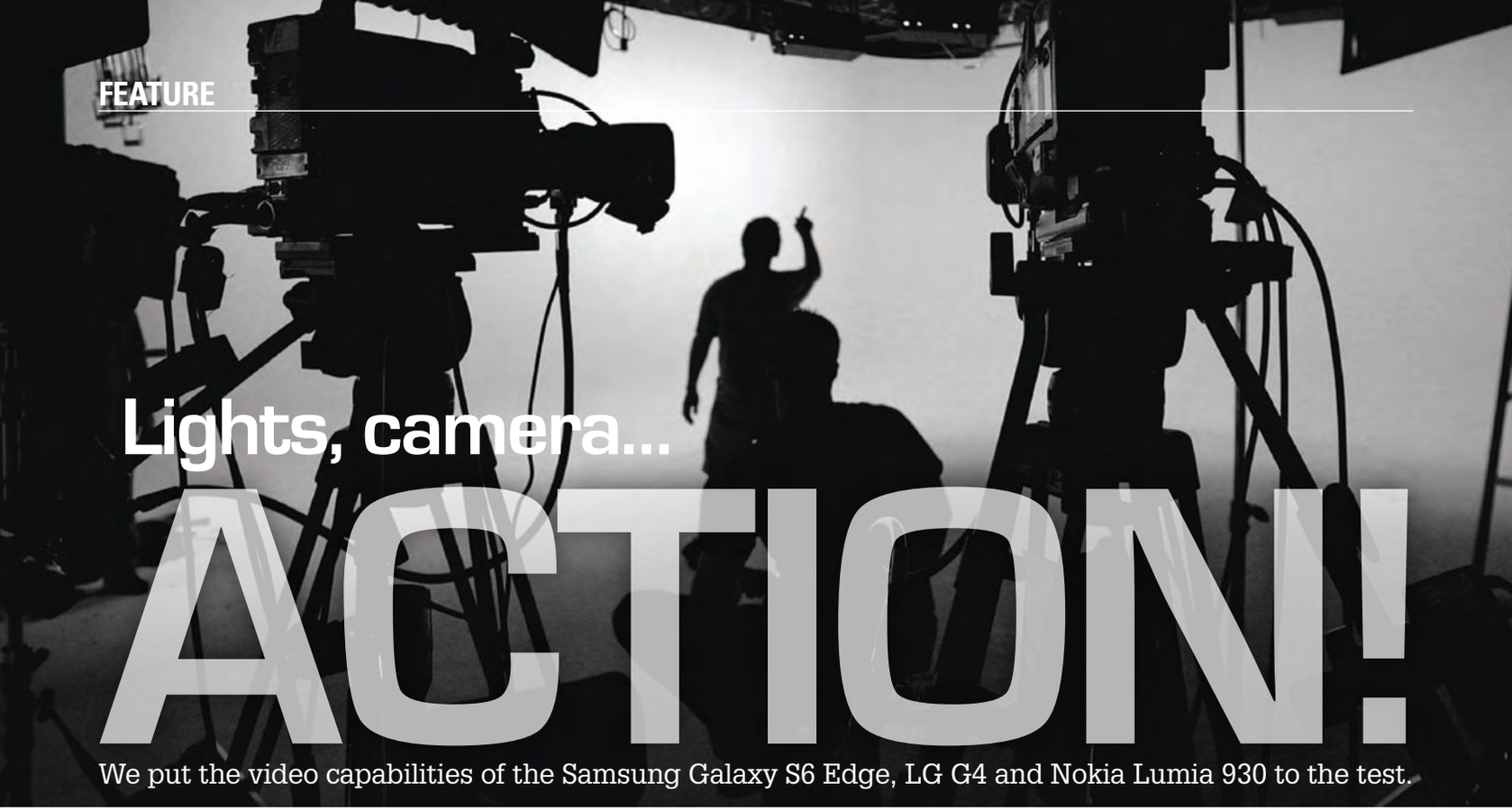
Snooper Ventura PB60 10400mAh Power Bank
Price: £39.99 **mAh:** 10,400



The Snooper Ventura is certainly one of the most uniquely designed power banks we've tested. It's composed of five cylindrical batteries housed in an orange shell. This flexible shell lets you mould the power bank into any shape, whilst its bright orange design makes it easy to find. It also packs a whopping 10,400mAh of power, which lets you quickly charge an iPhone 6 four times over.

Cobra JumPack **Price:** £79.99 **mAh:** 7,500

Don't let the Cobra JumPack's compact size fool you. It has enough power to jumpstart a car. We didn't test it on a car, but we can say that its 7,500 mAh does a decent job of rapidly recharging your handset. It's also equipped with an LED light, which makes it perfect if you're stranded on the roadside and need to get someone's attention.



Lights, camera... ACTION!

We put the video capabilities of the Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge, LG G4 and Nokia Lumia 930 to the test.

You may remember a couple of issues ago when we did a photo quality comparison test using the four best smartphones currently available. There were two clear winners in the test, the Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge and the LG G4. Both had excellent image quality that was simply too good for the competition. This issue, we decided to throw the gauntlet down on them again and subject them to a video comparison test against a professional camcorder. We realise that two smartphones isn't much of a test, so we've also thrown in the Microsoft Lumia 930 for good measure, another device that has a fantastic camera.

COMMON GROUND

Why have we picked these three devices in particular? Simple, they all shoot in the highest video standard possible. 4K video is the current buzzword surrounding smartphone video and it's a pretty big deal indeed. 4K equates to the number of horizontal pixels in the image; that means that each video shot on these devices has a monstrous 4096 pixels along its widest side. The 4K cinema standard that each of these smartphones use is 4096 x 2160, this equates to a mind-boggling 8,847,360 pixels! We wanted to see if all of these extra megapixels and flagship post-processing features could make them a match for a professional camcorder, so that's exactly what we've done.

THE TEST

The camcorder we'll be putting them up against is a trusty Sony Z1, a solid workhorse camera that has been used for many years. Although it's a little old by today's standards, it is still heavily used within the TV production scene due to its reliable image quality and solid durability.

The Sony Z1 shoots at a resolution of 1440 x 1080i, then uses some fancy upscaling to increase the image to Full HD 1920 x 1080i. This means that on paper it actually shoots at a much lower resolution than its counterparts. The thing is, the Z1e has a trump card up its sleeve. It actually uses three 1/3" sensors for each piece of the RGB colour spectrum. The effective sensor size of all three combined is much higher than that of the comparative smartphones. It also has a full suite of manual controls, allowing maximum control of the shooting process.

For the test we'll be shooting in three differing scenes, each showcasing a different element of the camera's functionality. We will also be conducting three smaller tests which focus on the inner workings of the hardware.

Unless manual settings are available, we will revert to whatever automatic settings the smartphones use by default. We'll start by addressing this fact and admitting that none of them have manual video settings. If you try to set them up beforehand, it simply reverts to automatic when recording.

All video footage is completely unedited and straight from the device, so you can be sure that the test will be 100% accurate. The only exception is the Z1, where we have supplied both a graded and ungraded images for comparison. Since the Z1 is a professional camcorder that is manufactured to produce natural, somewhat uninspiring images that are perfect for post-production, it offers the fairest comparison to the incredibly vibrant and oversaturated smartphone equivalents.

To view the videos in full, head over to the What Mobile website where we have uploaded each one individually.

SMARTPHONE CAMERA OVERVIEWS

LG G4

Megapixels: 16
Sensor Size: 1/2.6"
Aperture: f/1.8
Back Side Illuminated: No
Image Stabilisation: Yes (optical)
Video resolution: 2160p

Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge

Megapixels: 16
Sensor Size: 1/2.6"
Aperture: f/1.9
Back Side Illuminated: Yes
Image Stabilisation: Yes (optical)
Video resolution: 2160p

Nokia Lumia 930

Megapixels: 20
Sensor Size: 1/2.5"
Aperture: f/2.4
Back Side Illuminated: Yes
Image Stabilisation: Yes (optical)
Video resolution: 2160p

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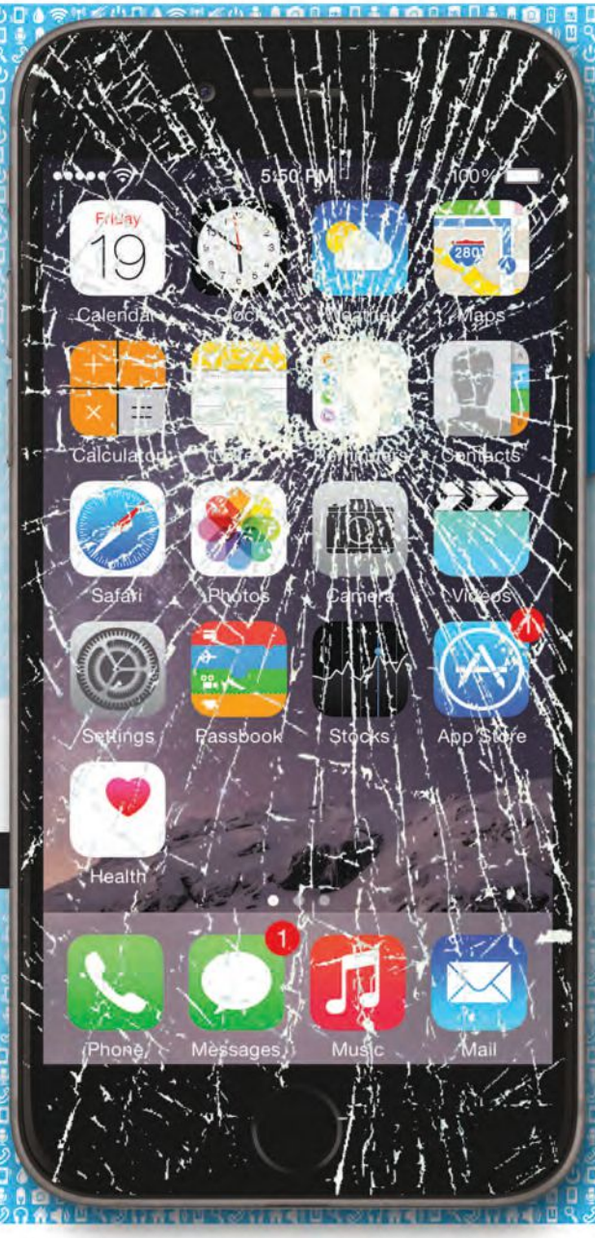

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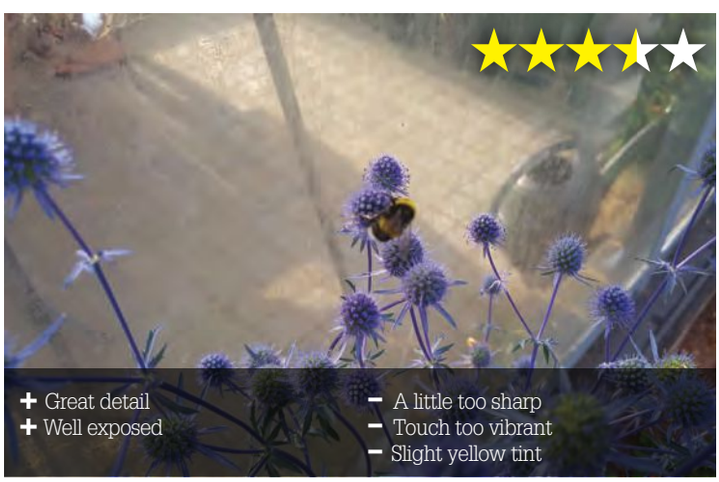
TEST 1: MACRO

For this test we headed to Clissold Park in London's Stoke Newington, which is home to several animals, birds and insects. We intended to take the footage in the Butterfly Dome, which was unfortunately shut. Luckily, we stumbled across this plant teeming with bees as we were leaving somewhat disappointed. It turned out to be a great spot for testing the macro capabilities of the cameras. Macro is defined as large-scale, literally meaning 'bigger than usual'. It's essentially close-up video designed to pick out all the detail in tiny insects and the like.

All of the three cameras performed very well in this test, with mostly excellent autofocus picking out the nuances of detail. If we had to pick a winner it would probably be the Lumia 930, though we must stress it was very close. The Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge and LG G4 both produces very sharp videos with excellent levels of detail but we couldn't help feeling they were both a little over-vibrant. Colours popped too much and the LG G4 seemed a touch too sharp. The Lumia 930 seemed more natural overall, with a pleasingly neutral colour palette. We were also able to get a little closer with the Lumia 930 without losing focus, something which is evident in the video tests. Despite the Lumia 930 also having the highest aperture of all the cameras on test, it also managed to produce the best depth of field. This is a probably a result of being able to get closer to the subject.

Still, none of them could match the benchmark Z1e. The camera was able to zoom much further, with the variable aperture allowing for greater control over depth of field. The manual focus also allowed selective focus of the area we wanted, instead of relying on the software to 'get it right'. The resulting footage was expectedly dull but beautifully natural. When graded, you can see just how much a professional camera can excel in producing that 'TV look' we all aspire to achieve.

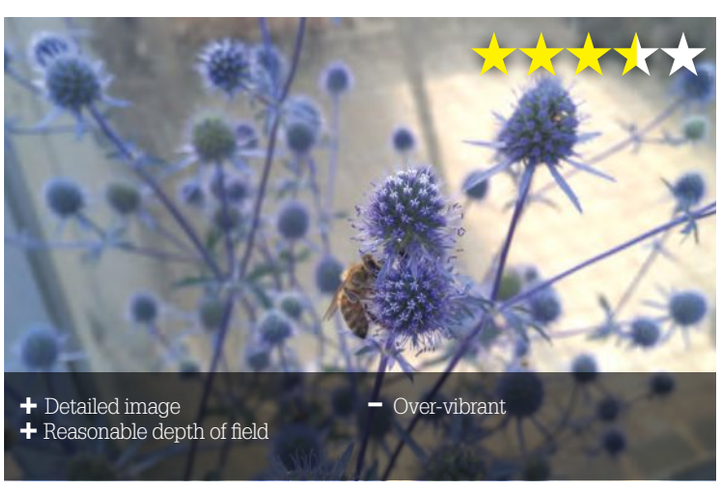
LG G4



★★★★☆

+ Great detail
+ Well exposed
− A little too sharp
− Touch too vibrant
− Slight yellow tint

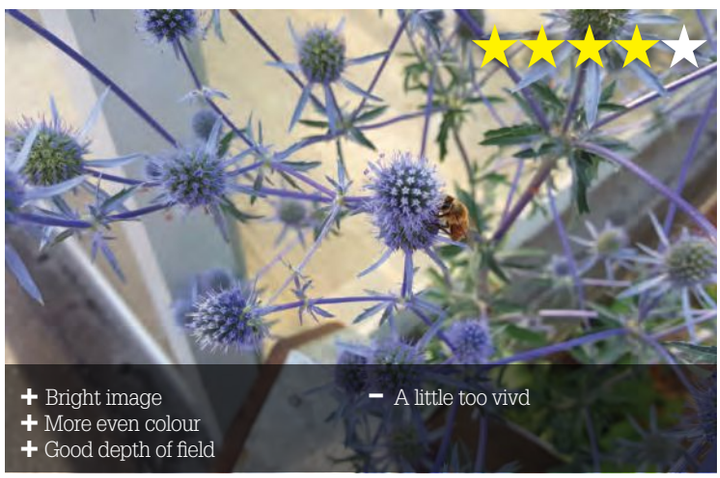
Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge



★★★★☆

+ Detailed image
+ Reasonable depth of field
− Over-vibrant

Nokia Lumia 930

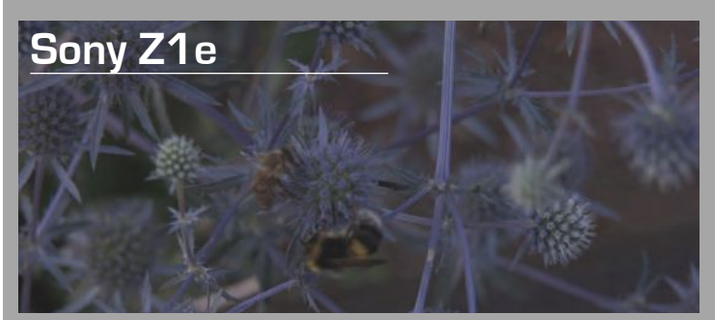


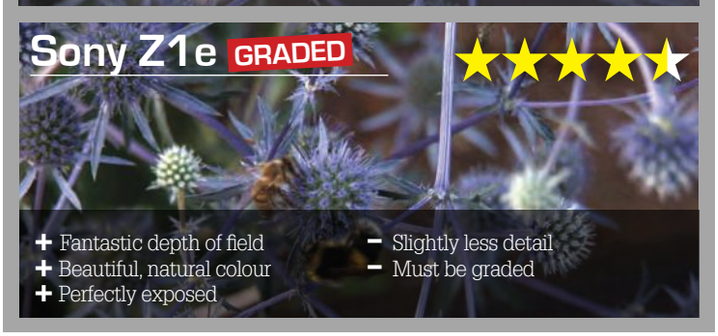
★★★★☆

+ Bright image
+ More even colour
+ Good depth of field
− A little too vivd

4K: YAY OR NAY

While the 4K made the image sharper on compatible screens, it didn't help to make the overall image better. All those pixels couldn't overshadow the much better result given by the Sony Z1e





★★★★½

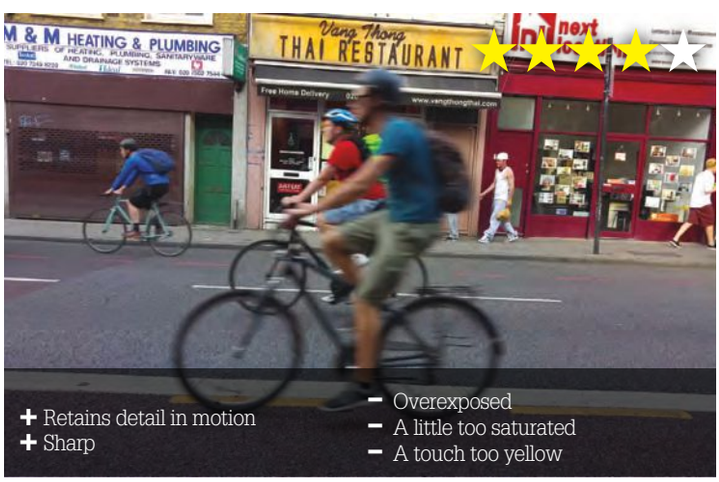
+ Fantastic depth of field
+ Beautiful, natural colour
+ Perfectly exposed
− Slightly less detail
− Must be graded

TEST 2: MOTION

The next test was a simple one to see if motion was going to cause any issues with the recordings. For this, all we needed was a busy street and plenty of traffic. After leaving the park, we found a junction not far away which was perfect for the test. Cars and cyclists littered the road, with only a red traffic light separating us.

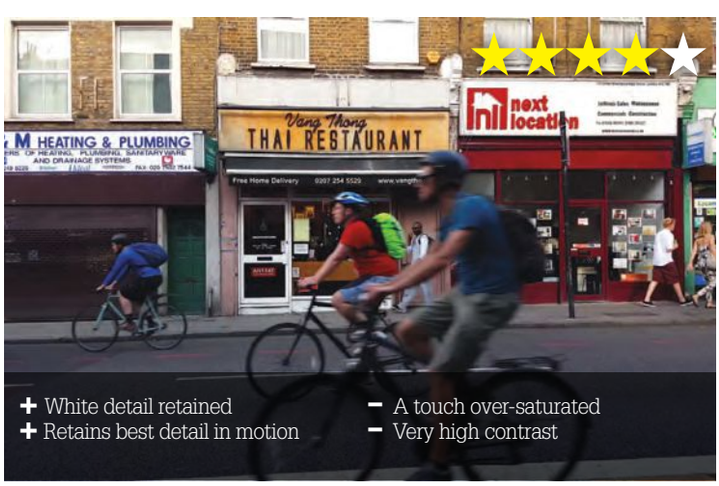
One of the core aspects in video is how the camera handles fast-moving scenes. Motion blur is a common side-effect of this and sadly it is unavoidable in most cases. Unless you own a high-speed camera capable of shooting at ridiculously high frame rates, things will never be pin-sharp. Still, we've become accustomed to this technological limitation and it is now a desirable effect in cinema to achieve that authentic 'film look'. This dates back to original film cameras which used to shoot in 24 frames per second. When people think of the film look, this is basically what they are describing. Higher frame rates tend to look strange in cinema and are often described as too smooth.

LG G4



+ Retains detail in motion
+ Sharp
− Overexposed
− A little too saturated
− A touch too yellow

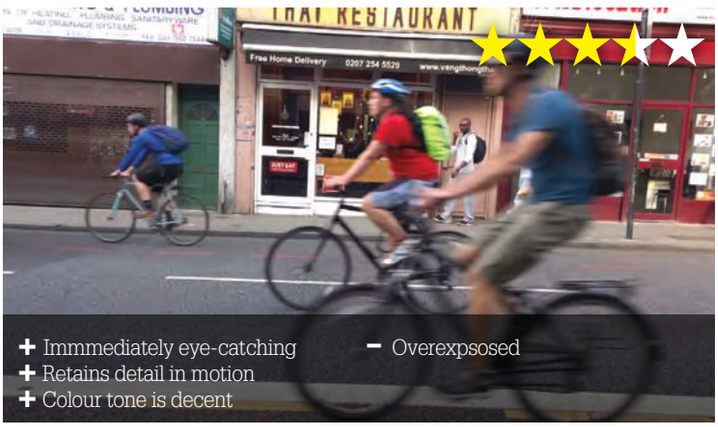
Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge



+ White detail retained
+ Retains best detail in motion
− A touch over-saturated
− Very high contrast

All three of the smartphones produced similar results, recording in 30 frames per second. There was very little motion blur and the overall scene was pretty damn sharp, with zero ghosting tails behind each of the objects. Compared with the benchmark, which only records at 25FPS, they retained more motion detail due to the higher frame rate. It is also worth noting that the Z1e records in an interlaced format, compared with the smartphones which all record in a progressive format. The former is known for being poorer when shooting fast-moving objects and is much more suited to interviews and presenting work. In this test, it most definitely shows.

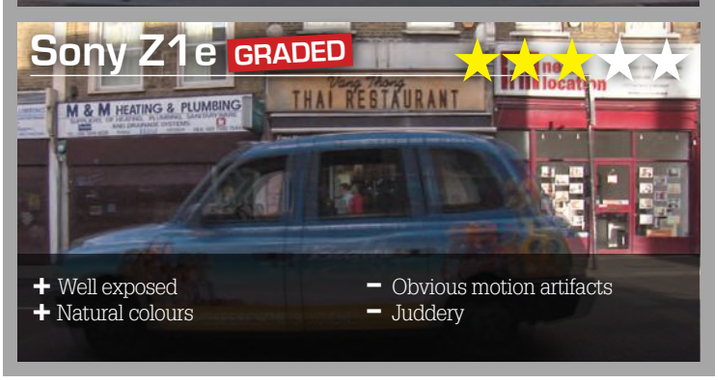
Nokia Lumia 930



+ Immmediately eye-catching
+ Retains detail in motion
+ Colour tone is decent
− Overexpsosed

4K: YAY OR NAY

Unsurprisingly, 4K can't really help with motion as it plays no part in it. Having a sharper image won't suddenly increase the frame-rate. In fact, in the case of the smartphones, it actually decreased it. All three of the smartphones were only able to shoot at a maximum of 30 frames per second in 4K versus 60 in 1080p.



+ Well exposed
+ Natural colours
− Obvious motion artifacts
− Juddery

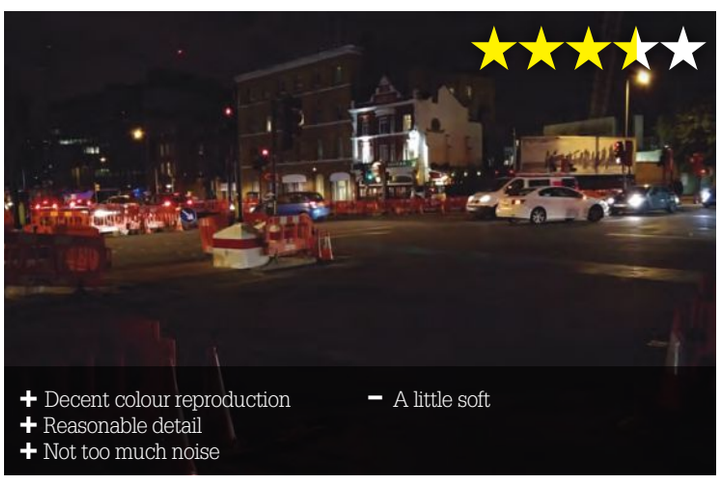
TEST 3: NIGHT

For this we wanted to test out the shooting capabilities of the cameras in a generic night-time setting. Rather than finding somewhere that was pitch black, we wanted a naturally lit area that had a good contrast between dark and light elements. It just so happens that an area of Whitechapel high street was the perfect spot. Night shots are always going to be difficult for smartphone cameras, whether it's a flagship shooter or not. Unsurprisingly, none of the three excelled in the test. There was a definite loser, though the other two were fairly close.

The Lumia 930 performed pretty badly in this test. The image was devoid of noise, which is a definite plus… But it was also devoid of any sort of detail. It was just black. It seems that Microsoft had decided to dial back the gain in favour of keeping the image relatively clean; this unfortunately meant that it was near impossible to pick anything out. We even attempted to boost the shadows using software in an attempt to see if any detail had been retained for post-production uses. Alas, the camera had recorded none of it. To add further insult to injury, our old Lumia 920 even performed better in low light than the Lumia 930. Ouch. As for the other two, we'd say that the LG G4 narrowly pips it, though it definitely amounts to a matter of taste. The Samsung retained a bit more noise, which can be seen in the sky, whereas the LG G4 opted for some more aggressive noise reduction. The LG G4 also had a slightly warmer colour palette, which we prefer to the Samsung's strange, greeny/yellow tinge.

The benchmark Sony Z1e was business as usual. It captured far more of the dynamic range, with an evenly lit scene that showed all the visible detail. The colour range was also way more neutral than the competition, which we would guess is one reason why the camera captured so much detail. The smartphones all attempted to compensate by dialling up the saturation and contrast to crazy amounts, resulting in a lot of lost detail in the shadows. High contrast does not always mean better.

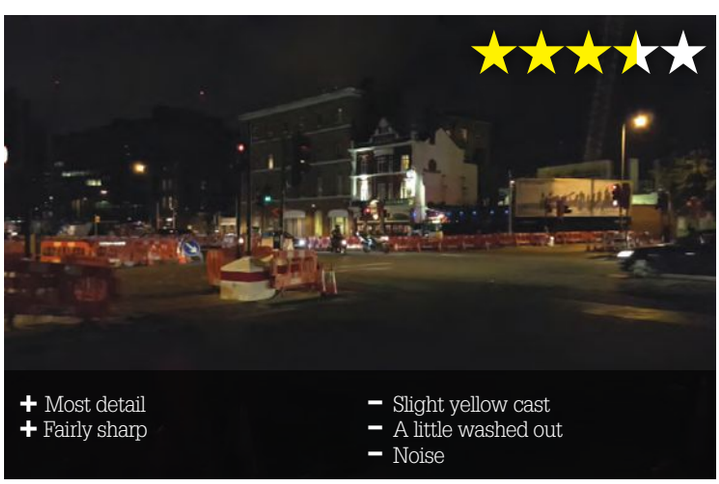
LG G4



★★★★☆

+ Decent colour reproduction
+ Reasonable detail
+ Not too much noise
− A little soft

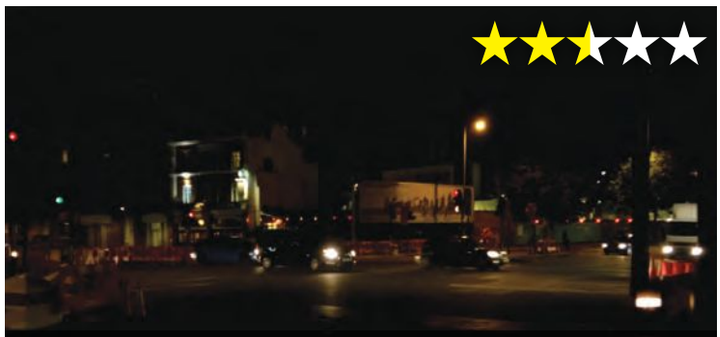
Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge



★★★★☆

+ Most detail
+ Fairly sharp
− Slight yellow cast
− A little washed out
− Noise

Nokia Lumia 930



★★★☆☆

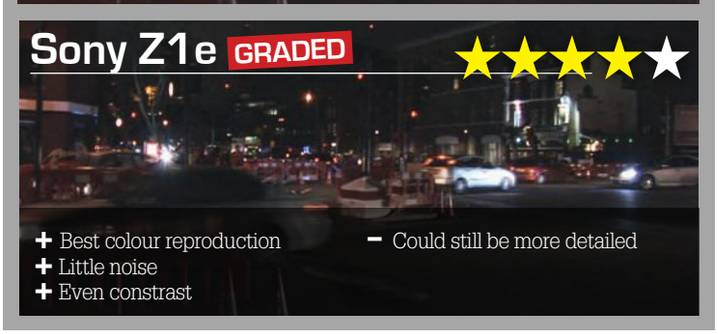
+ Very little noise
+ Sharp
− Far too dark
− Yellow tint
− Loss of detail

4K: YAY OR NAY

You would expect 4K to make it easier for details in the image to pop out but this was not the case. The smartphones all struggled to capture sufficient detail overall, which meant that all those extra pixels basically became redundant.

Sony Z1e

Sony Z1e GRADED



★★★★☆

+ Best colour reproduction
+ Little noise
+ Even constrast
− Could still be more detailed

ADDITIONAL TESTS

We also conducted three smaller tests in order to gauge every area of the cameras recording capabilities.

Sound:

The Lumia 930 was a well-deserved winner here, with its Dolby digital surround sound and rich recording capabilities overshadowing the LG and Samsung devices. The LG sounded a little thin and the Samsung was dull. Neither of them could record a concert without the expected distortion, whereas the Lumia managed it without any fuss.

Zoom:

None of the smartphone cameras had an optical zoom, so the only available option for distant videos was digital zoom, which degrades the picture quality. While there was no clear winner, the Lumia 930's higher megapixel count means it can theoretically zoom in further without as much degradation.

Image Stabilisation:

The LG G4 and Nokia Lumia 930 both retain optical image stabilisation while recording in 4K, while the Samsung disables it for anything higher than 1080p. This sadly means that when shooting in those ultra-high resolutions, you'll need to be more careful with the latter. While it's close between the Lumia 930 and the LG G4, we'd have to say that the technology in the Lumia is ever slightly more superior at keeping your shots stable.

CONCLUSION

Let's cut to the chase; they don't compete with a true camcorder. Image quality may be better when taken straight from the device, but grading shows just what the Sony Z1e is capable of. The smartphones favour an immediately desirable image over the ability to tweak it afterwards; this is somewhat expected. There's also a complete lack of manual shooting options, which makes it incredibly difficult to properly expose and colour balance your shot.

Was there a clear winner overall? It's hard to say and, while we are inclined to say the Lumia 930, its low-light shooting really let it down. It happily won in all other areas on the test but you sadly can't rely on it for general purpose shooting. For night recording, both the LG G4 and Samsung will likely suffice. If you want a daytime device, get the Lumia 930.

We'd also conclude that 4K is still nothing more than a gimmick. While it seems cool on paper and produces some very detailed video, it doesn't really enhance the image as much as expected. Plus, in the case of the Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge, it even causes certain features to be lost as a result. If recording in 4K means that you can't use optical image stabilisation, it's probably better to lower the resolution.

Final Results:

Winner - Sony HVR-Z1e

1 – Sony HVR-Z1e ★★★★½
2 – Lumia 930 ★★★½☆
3= – LG G4 ★★★☆☆
3= – Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge ★★★☆☆

Heroes and villains

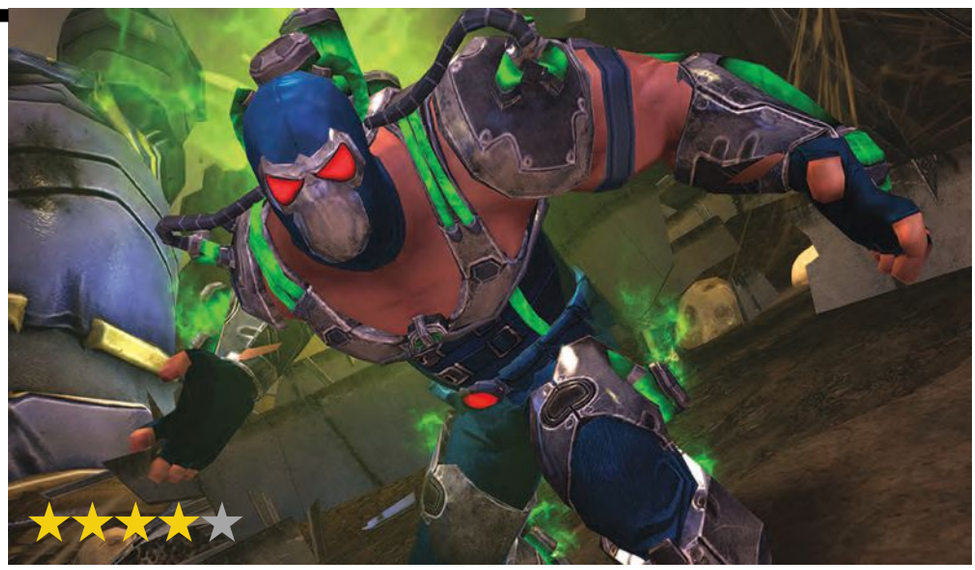
This month's reviews concentrate on action battles plus new spins on some old-school classics.

Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

DC Comics Legends

Free (iOS only)

DC Comics Legends blends classic card-collecting elements with turn-based battles against some of the universe's most evil villains. You get to play as your favourite superheroes and fight in a multitude of arenas from the comics, including Metropolis. Earn credits to upgrade your team and create the ultimate crime fighting force. Although it's still in BETA, the game feels surprisingly polished and runs very well. As a RPG, you'll also be treated to a story which centres on the usual themes of mass destruction and saving the world.



Magic Duels

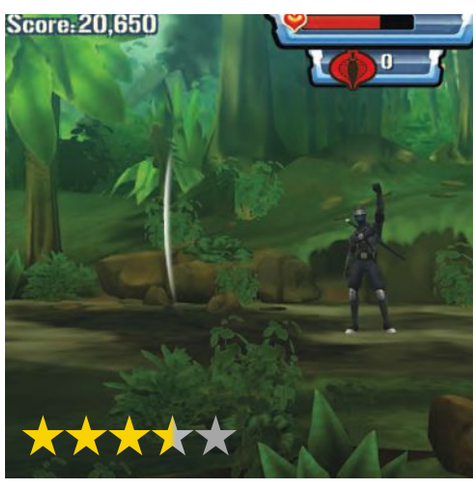
Free (iOS only)

Magic Duels is the first official mobile adaptation of the popular Magic: The Gathering card battler. You'll get the ability to build your own decks and follow five stories from the Magic universe. Gold is earned for each victory, which can be further used to upgrade your deck. If you're new to Magic, this game is the perfect way to jump in.

G.I. Joe: Strike

Free (Android and iOS)

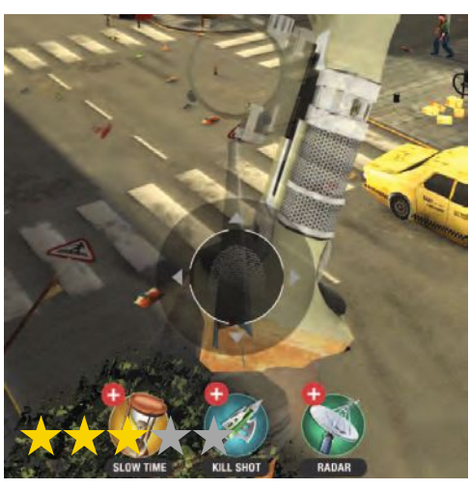
If you've played the recent Kung Fury, you will feel perfectly at home with G.I. Joe: Strike. The game is incredibly simple in its mechanics, with only two controls to remember. Tap the left of the screen to attack enemies on the left side, and vice-versa for the right. The skill comes from performing hits at the correct time so that you do not get overwhelmed.



Dead Among Us

Free (Android, iOS)

Dead Among Us is your classic gallery shooter which puts the player in control of a survivor during a zombie apocalypse. With nothing more than a bow, you must carefully aim onto the streets below to protect other companions and survivors from hordes of the undead. Controls are simple and the action is fairly laid back, though you need to keep your trigger-finger ready.



Vainglory

Free (Android, iOS)

If you're familiar with multiplayer online battle arena's like League of Legends and DOTA 2, you'll immediately feel at home in Vainglory. After a thorough tutorial, you'll be immediately thrown into various 3v3 player matches in either casual or ranked playlists. With full multitouch support, it allows for fast movements within the battlefield, sometimes eclipsing what is possible on PC equivalents.

Sonic Runners

Free (Android, iOS)

Sonic Runners is a great casual game that captures the essence of classic games in the series. With its traditional 2D side-scrolling gameplay, it plays exactly like a mobile Sonic game should. Simply tap the screen to make Sonic jump and make it to the end of the level as quickly as possible, collecting rings, power-ups and crystals along the way. Simple yet effective fun.

SBK15 – Official Mobile Game

Free (Android and iOS)

SBK15 – Official Mobile Game is the latest in a long line of official motorbike racing instalments. Featuring the full roster of 24 elite riders and 13 tracks, there's plenty to get your teeth stuck into. With full 3D visuals and plenty of control flexibility, it plays fantastic and offers plenty of depth for casual gamers and racing fans alike.

PES Club Manager

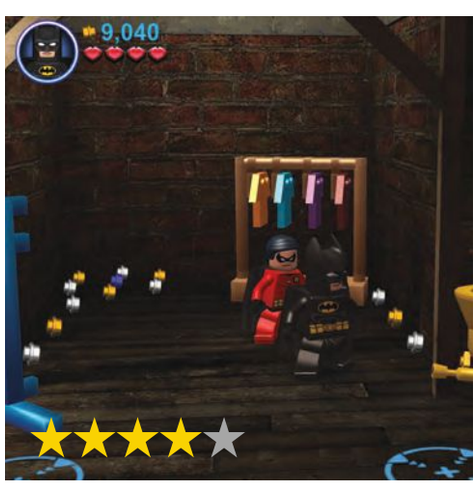
£7.99 (Android and iOS)

PES Club Manager is a great football simulator from Konami that manages to be surprisingly deep. With a full 3D match engine and real-time tactic changes, you'll be feeling like a manager in no time. There's plenty to get your teeth stuck into, from player development to youth team management and stadium enhancements. If you're after a solid mobile managerial experience, this is a very good option.

Lego Batman: Beyond Gotham

Free (iOS)

A solid edition to the Lego franchise, even it fails to bring anything significantly new. As a mobile port of the console version, it's got pretty much everything. Space battles add a little bit of variety to the formula, though you'll mostly be hanging out with the Justice League kicking some villain's ass.



Lego Minifigures: Online

£3.83 (iOS, Android)

If you've ever wanted to play a Lego-based MMORPG, this is the closest you're going to get. It takes the classic formula from other titles and throws it in a series of worlds that can be traversed with groups of friends online. It does tend to slow down in places but this is still a very fun title.

A tour de force

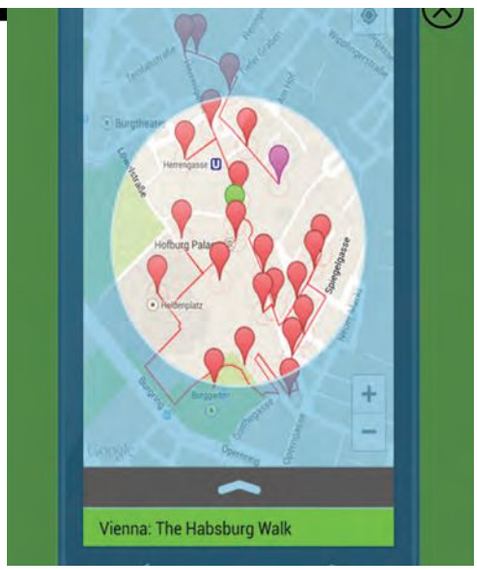
The latest IOS and Android apps include a talking guidebook plus aids to make your life easier.

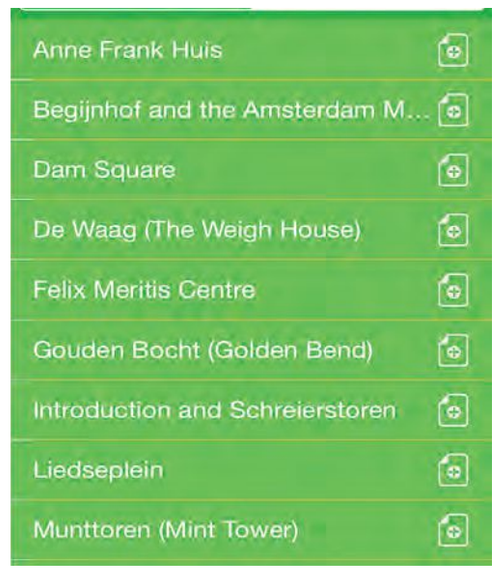
Reviewer: Alex Yau – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

Cities Talking

Free (iOS and Android)

Cities Talking is a tour guide app that adds vivid detail to the history of London, Paris, Amsterdam and other cities. Each guide is voiced by local celebrities, such as Christopher Biggins in London, which means you'll always have a charismatic guide in your pocket. A clever tracking system means certain parts of each tour won't start until you're in the area. That means you can explore in your own time or grab a coffee without worrying about the tour carrying on without you.





NINE

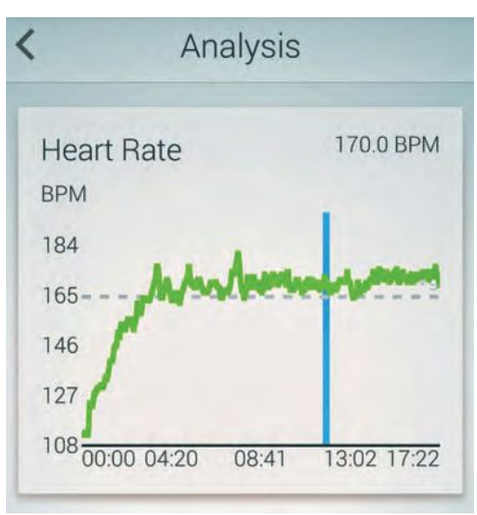
£2.99 (iOS)

Most to-do lists suffer from the same problem; they can all be very drab. Not NINE, however. It lets users take photographs as visual reminders for their everyday tasks. The option to add locations, notes and specific tags adds more vital information to each task.

Jabra Sport life

Free (iOS and Android)

If you own a pair of Jabra Pulse or Coach headphones, then the Jabra Sport Life app is a must. Whether it's a hardcore gym session or a 10k run, the app works with the headphones to provide detailed information on reps, sets, speed, distance and much more.



Manything

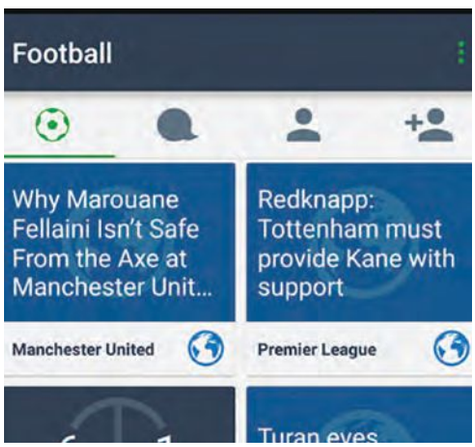
Free (iOS)

Manything turns any old iOS device you no longer use into a high-quality security camera. Just set the device up and you can receive live streams of anything the iOS device sees through its camera. It's also motion activated so you can immediately catch and record any would-be burglar's actions in high quality as soon as they trigger the device.

Yakatak Football

Free (iOS and Android)

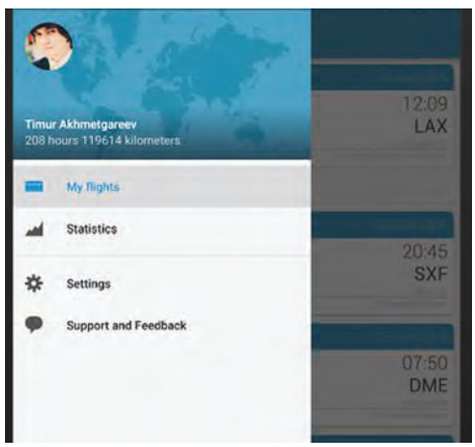
A must for football fans. Yakatak Football gathers live scores, results, news and match alerts from more than 600 leagues and tournaments across the globe. So whether you're a Premier League fan or want to know the scores from some minor league in China somewhere, Yakatak football will keep you in touch with all the action.



App in the Air

Free (iOS and Android)

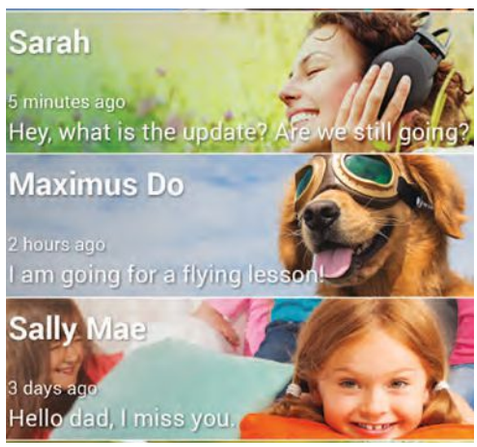
This personal flying assistant will ensure your journey from the airport to your destination goes smoothly. It covers major airlines such as KLM and British Airways alongside the busiest airports like Hong Kong and Heathrow. Up-to-date flight news, airport tips and in-airport navigation maps are just some of the many useful features included in the app.



Invi SMS

Free (Android)

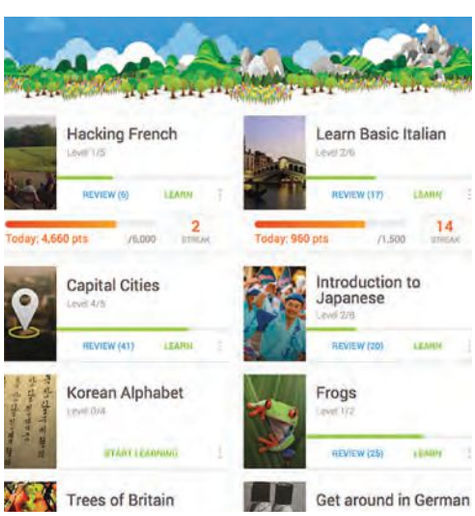
Invi SMS jazzes up your phone's stock SMS app into a colourful and more feature-packed service. You can add many attractive themes, customize chat bubbles with various fonts and alter notification sounds. You can even share YouTube clips or play games with your friends.



Memrise

Free (iOS and Android)

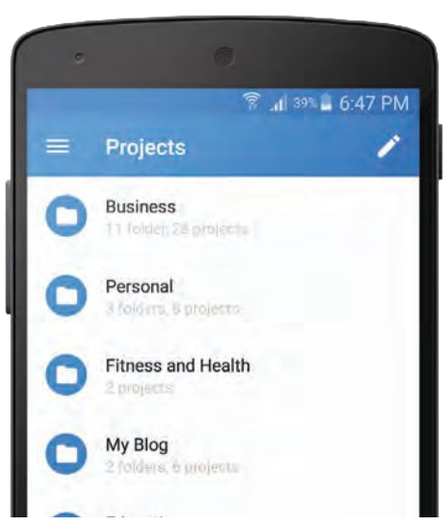
Millions have used Memrise to help them learn from over 200 different languages including Spanish, French, German, Mandarin and more. It uses memory-enhancing techniques tested through scientific research to help you learn your chosen language. The resulting drills and lessons are incredibly simple, but easy to learn.



Chaos Control

Free (iOS and Android)

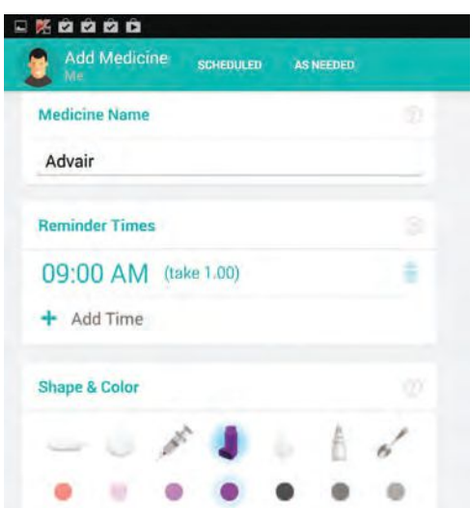
Whether you're organising a new company or are simply planning a holiday, Chaos Control can help you organise these tasks. Just define your goals and outcomes, alongside the required tasks. Chaos Planner then sorts everything by date, place, people and other categories into certain smart lists to help you achieve your goals.



Medisafe

Free (iOS and Android)

With our busy lifestyles, sometimes it's easy to forget simple but important tasks like when to take our medication. This easy-to-use app reminds you when to take your pills and at what time. You can set notifications for different dosages and have them sent to family members, so they can remind you as well.



Nintendo 3DS

Final Fantasy Tactics fans after a fix of their favourite game should look at Mercenaries Saga 2.

Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

Mercenaries Saga 2 ★★★★½

Publisher: CIRCLE Ent.
Developer: Rideon Inc.
Where to Buy: Nintendo eShop
Price: £3.99

If you're a fan of Final Fantasy Tactics, then this is probably the closest you'll get to a true successor. It might not be developed by Square Enix but you can immediately feel the heritage when booting up the game. Everything from the graphics to the gameplay offers an immediate comparison to the popular JRPG, which could be seen by some as a rip-off. To say that this feels like a Square Enix game should be the ultimate compliment.

The primary mercenaries' mode is fairly big, offering 32 missions and roughly 20 hours of gameplay for most people. The storyline is typical zany fantasy and centres around the poisoning of a prince, who the main character must save by embarking on a quest to find the antidote. There's no obligation to follow the story and text can be freely skipped at any point, though I urge you to follow it through or you'll be missing out. Without an overworld or any type of map, the story arc is the only thing that stops the game from being a series of random battles with no connection.

Each battle takes place in an arena made up of grid-like squares. In a similar vain to Final Fantasy Tactics, players must carefully negotiate their characters around the battlefield in a turn-based fashion to kill the enemy. You'll be using various types of weapons and spells to dispose of them, each with a particular set of traits. Terrain and positioning both play key factors within each battle, with the winner gaining money, experience and skill points for a successful victory. Each battle takes around 30 minutes to complete, with the very little animations to slow down the action. While I'd never call a turn-based RPG fast and frantic, it definitely feels fluent.

TACTICAL FREEDOM

Points can then be spent in between battles, with an emphasis on upgrading stats and buying new weapons and armour. Each character will initially be locked into a specific class, which limits them to a particular set of skills. Once you reach level 20, the shackles are off and you can freely swap classes between battles. It's a neat little progressive element that stops earlier levels being too easy but still gives you the tactical freedom in later, harder levels.

While the graphics don't dazzle, they have a nostalgic feel that is very similar to classic 2D RPGs. The only disappointing factor is the lack of touch-screen support. As the primary feature on the 3DS, you would've expected them to make more use of it than just a second screen for tracking stats. Still, at only £3.99 in the Nintendo eShop I think it's unfair to get picky with such a great title.

If you're after a Final Fantasy Tactics fix and can't wait for Square Enix to produce another, this is definitely a worthwhile substitute.

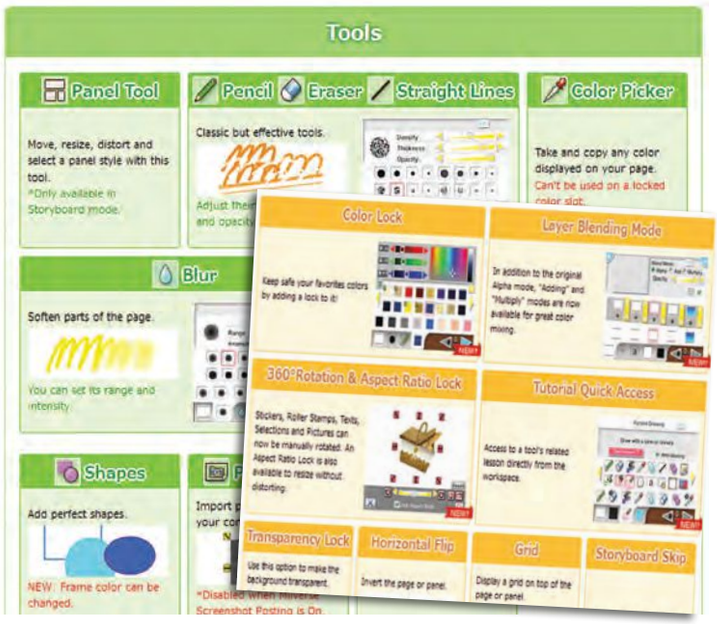
Comic Workshop 2 ★★★½☆

Developer: Collavier **Publisher:** Collavier
Where to Buy: Nintendo eShop **Price:** £7.99

I remember playing Mario Paint for the SNES as a kid and being thoroughly engrossed in the primitive concepts of filling pre-determined photographs with blocks of colour. The game still stands as one of my most remembered titles as a child and I still have the mouse peripheral somewhere in my attic to prove it. Comic Workshop 2 essentially feels like a much more modern version of this, giving you a more professional platform with which to partake in your favourite creative pastime.

The game goes surprisingly deep and allows you to draw on a blank canvas or use pre-set storyboard windows with a distinct manga inspiration. If you want to create a comic with a distinct manga theme, this is one of the few painting titles out there that will allow you to do it so quickly. You get an assortment of pencils and pens which can be set to varying thicknesses and opacities, along with stamps and rollers for painting backgrounds and quickly filling areas. The touchscreen is used for drawing and hardly feels the most responsive; most of the time it was easier to import pre-defined images and use the game as a presentation tool.

The game does offer Miiverse support, which is a welcome addition over its predecessor, though the execution is somewhat limited. You can only share original drawing created by yourself, which limits the games capability as a true comic workshop. Still, this is unavoidable and sits in-line with Nintendo's strict sharing policy. They're only trying to protect the younglings from the obligatory phallic comics that would appear should photo imports be allowed. This I completely understand.



Samurai Warriors Chronicles 3 ★★★½☆

Developer: Omega Force **Publisher:** Tecmo Koei
Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £34.99

If you're a fan of mass beat em' ups such as Dynasty Warriors, this game will be right up your alley. Samurai Warriors Chronicles 3 is a spin-off of said title, offering a more personal approach compared with the character-driven elements of the Dynasty Warriors franchise. In this game, the focus lies in creating your own character and guiding them through a plot which is loosely based on the samurai in 16th century Japan. It's a great idea for newcomers who may not have kept up with previous instalments and fits well within the pick-up-and-play handheld ecosystem.

Gameplay remains unchanged to past iterations, with huge armies and plenty of hack 'n' slashing being the order of the day. You can use all the standard attack and combos to dispose of foes, as well as the supers which annihilate large portions of the battlefield in a single move. You now have the option of controlling four characters on the battlefield, which opens things up for a little variety. In practice, it's not really that much different from using the two characters in previous incarnations. It'll help you stay closer to the action but not much else.

A bonding system indicates how much your fellow samurai admire you, though it takes a great deal of effort to really pull off. It's also a bit pointless too, as it's only really useful for unlocking extra slices of the story. In battle, it offers no benefits whatsoever. There's also a fair amount of slowdown when the action gets hectic, which is exasperated by using the 3D. A shame for an otherwise fun game.

PlayStation Vita

The latest instalment of Geometry Wars has evolved to become the definitive version in the series.

Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

Geometry Wars 3: Dimensions Evolved

★★★★☆

Developer: Lucid Games **Publisher:** Sierra Entertainment
Where to Buy: PlayStation Store **Price:** £13.99

Geometry Wars is a classic twin-stick shooter that is made for one purpose: brutally punishing anyone who tries to conquer it. If you've played other games in the genre before, you'll likely know what to expect here. Enemies come in all sorts of polygonal forms and it's your job to shoot them before they shoot you. Bizarre Creations first developed Geometry Wars as a mini-game for the highly popular Project Gotham Racing series. Players could access it through the in-game garage and enjoy a little bit of retro inspired fun in-between races.

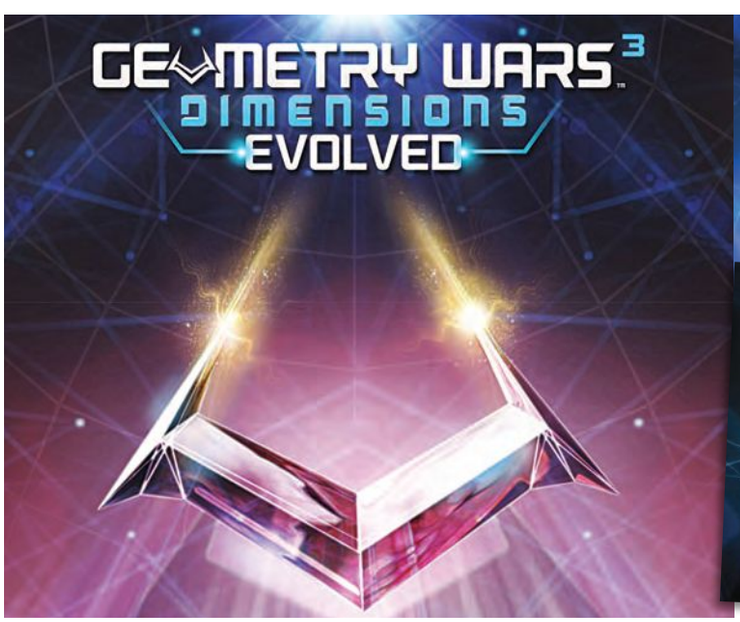
The third incarnation carries everything over from the second title plus more. The basic five high-score modes from Geometry Wars: Touch/Retro Evolved 2 are all included in Classic Mode: Deadline, Retro, King, Pacifism and Waves. There's also an insanely difficult adventure mode, where high scores unlock boss battles which help to progress to the next level. It's pitched as a campaign, though it feels more like a series of challenges that you need to overcome. Still, with more than 50 levels to complete, you'll be clocking up high scores for quite a while before you get bored. That's probably Geometry Wars' most defining feature, the leaderboards. Never has a game left so compulsive in the need to have 'just one more go'. Seeing a friend beat your hi-score is devastating and fun at the same time.

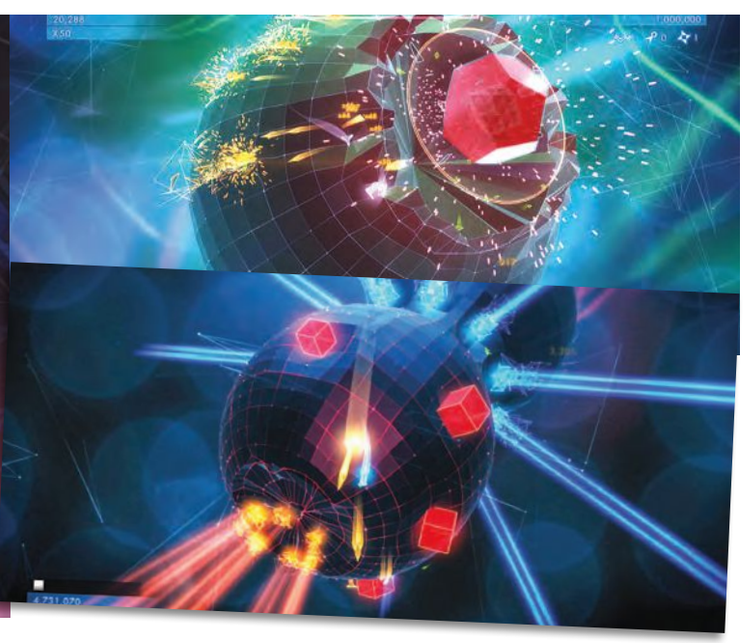
Possibly the coolest new feature in Geometry Wars 3 is ability to fight in fully three-dimensional arenas that that twist and turn as you navigate them. While none of the levels are particularly insane with regards to their design, it's probably for the best. Trying to avoid hordes of neon gunfire on a frantically spinning planet-like object is disorientating enough, thanks. Thankfully, this is somewhat alleviated by a series of friendly drones which will accompany you during the level, mirroring your movements and attacking foes. It takes some of the pressure off yourself but also makes the game even more frantic. Like it couldn't already get any crazier.

FULL GAME EXPERIENCE

Enemy counts and bullet counts remain the same as the console version, though certain visual effects have been dialled back to keep the game moving at a smooth 60 frames-per-second. It's mostly just background-related stuff like scenery and ambient effects, which means you'll still get to experience all the flashy neon sprites dashing around the screen and exploding when you hit them. On a small screen such as the PlayStation Vita, I would argue that it isn't too much of a loss considering the amount of available screen real-estate. At times it can be difficult enough to see as it is.

Although it's essentially the same game as previous versions, with the additional extra of some 3D maps, Geometry Wars 3: Dimensions still manages to feel fresh and exciting. You'll never play the same level twice, with the random nature of the game creating some truly maddening scenarios. If you have never had the chance to play these titles before, you can't beat this definitive version. Just be prepared to die. A lot.





BlazBlue: Chrono Phantasma EXTEND

Developer: Arc System Works **Publisher:** Arc System Works **Where to Buy:** In-Store **Price:** £29.99

As far as crazy Japanese fighting games go, BlazBlue is definitely up there among the craziest. The visual art direction in the game is fantastic, with some striking anime visuals backed up with some dazzling effects. The game follows on from the last-gen version of the same name which released on the Playstation 3. Now gamers can finally get a true portable experience on their Playstation Vita. And what an experience it is.

The formula remains much the same, which is a good thing because there wasn't much wrong to begin with. Attack the other character to fill up your heat gauge and then unleash a devastating special attack that cripples the enemy. A revamped guard gauge system now allows you to dish out Guard Crush attacks when the other player's barrier gauge is low, adding yet another strategic element to the game. It forces players to adopt a more offensive play-style so as to quickly break the opponents guard barrier and get the upper hand.

An additional two characters have been added to the game's 26-strong roster, though only one of them is truly unique enough to stand out: Celica A. Mercury is a refreshing character thanks to her tag team approach that sees a robotic doll mimic her every move but Lambda No.11 is essentially a re-skinned version of Nu -No.13.

NekoBuro – Cats Block

Developer: F K Digital **Publisher:** Neko Entertainment **Where to Buy:** PlayStation Store **Price:** £6.49

Another match-three puzzler to add to the list, NekoBuro – CatsBlock manages to separate itself with overwhelming cuteness and a bizarre storyline. When a bunch of alien cats are hit by an energy storm, one of them (named Totan) ends up crash landing on Earth. Scared of his new environment, the feline is adopted by a kind-hearted girl named Rino who takes him into her home. Totan quickly realises that he likes Earth and decides the he wants his friends to come join. From there, it's all about completing levels to help Totan reunite with his friends.

With five chapters each consisting of 10 missions each, there's plenty of gameplay in NekoBuro. The basic idea is to line up three coloured cats in a row, getting points for each successful match. Cats come in blocks of three and are shot into the grid Tetris-style, landing on top of what's already there. Early levels are very simple with only a few colours on the board, though later ones can get much more confusing as the different cats begin to stack up. An item bar sits at the bottom right of the screen and incrementally fills up for each match. Each fill stage will unlock a different item and matching it with the correct coloured cat will unleash a special attack for maximum points.

The art style could be a little too cute for some and the poor translation of text to English is pretty laughable at times. Still, if you can stomach its cringeworthy inconsistencies, you'll be rewarded with a solid puzzler.

WHAT MOBILE

BUYER'S GUIDE

Buying a new device can be a difficult decision. Our comprehensive buyer's guide is here to help you.

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Acer Liquid E2

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £189.99
http://www.acer.co.uk

Stacked up against recent entries in the budget market, the Acer Liquid E2 is simply outdated. It's a functional Android handset but the clunky, thick design makes it feel like you're holding a toy and the software doesn't have any standout features. Acer will have to seriously raise its game if it's to be a contender in the phone market.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Quad-core 1.2 GHz
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 131 x 68 x 9.9mm
Weight 140g
Battery 2000 mAh

VERDICT: A dated, bulky phone saved by its reasonable price.

PERFORMANCE ★★☆☆☆
FEATURES ★★☆☆☆
USABILITY ★★☆☆☆
DESIGN ★★½☆☆

★★☆☆☆

Acer Liquid Jade

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £199
http://www.acer.co.uk

A decent handset from a smaller brand, the Liquid Jade has all the components in place to be a much better handset than it actually is. What holds it back is Acer's lack of polish when compared to bigger brands like Motorola. The end result is a handset that you could settle for, but probably shouldn't.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1,280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 140.5 x 69 x 7.5mm
Weight 110g
Battery 2,100 mAh

VERDICT: A decent low-end handset, but there are too many better alternatives.

PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Alcatel One Touch Pop S3

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £80
www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

The Alcatel One Touch POP S3 has its merits, especially taking into account the sub-£100 price of the device. The problem here is that by making room for 4G capability Alcatel has been forced to make cutbacks in crucial areas. However, if you are simply after the option to access faster web browsing and app speeds on the go, then the POP S3 offers you that at the cheapest price possible.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 123 x 64.4 x 9.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: Cheap, sure, but its poor quality renders its 4G capability near pointless.

PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆
USABILITY ★★☆☆☆
DESIGN ★★½☆☆

★★½☆☆

Alcatel One Touch Idol Alpha

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £319
www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

While it's good to see manufacturers branching out from the traditional black slab design, the Idol Alpha is a reminder of why the slab works. There are just too many compromises here, and the hardware does not make amends for them. Aside from the fact that Android itself is a powerful operating system that you can tailor to your heart's content, there's very little to redeem this phone.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 138 x 66.6 x 7.5mm
Weight 117.4 g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A decent camera is the only redeeming feature on this overpriced handset.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★☆☆☆

Alcatel One Touch Idol X+

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £TBC
www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

We usually greet lesser-known brands with open arms, but never has one disappointed as much as Alcatel with its One Touch Idol X+. Despite decent specs, it's the handsets flaws that hog the limelight. It's outperformed by other handsets in its price bracket in just about every respect. It's hard to envisage anyone patient enough to waste their time with it.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Octa-core 2GHz
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB or 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 140.4 x 69.1 x 7.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: With such great competition the One Touch Idol X+ simply looks irrelevant.

PERFORMANCE	★☆☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★☆☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★½☆☆☆

Amazon Fire Phone

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £400

When we first learned of the 3D capabilities of the Amazon Fire Phone we thought it might be a gimmick. Instead, it turned out to be the feature we love the most. Its other interface aspects are riddled with hiccups which can add to some severe usability issues. Its design has some questionable choices, too. It has a lot of potential though, and we're eagerly looking forward to a sequel.

OS Android KitKat 4.4
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7-inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 32GB
microSD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Camera 13MP front-facing, 2.1MP rear-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 139.2 x 66.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 160g
Battery 2,400 mAh

VERDICT: A promising yet flawed debut effort, reccommendable only to the curious.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★½
FEATURES	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★½☆
DESIGN	★★★½☆

★★★½☆

Apple iPhone 5c

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £469 (16GB) £549 (32GB)

If you need a splash of colour in your life and you're already a massive fan of the iOS operating system, then the iPhone 5c is much the same as the previous iPhone 5. There's a slightly upgraded front-facing camera and 4G will work on any UK network, but other than that you're getting the exact same thing. The iPhone 5c is simply around for those of you who love great design without breaking the bank.

OS iOS 7
Processor Dual-core 1.3GHz
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 640 x 1136 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080
Connectivity 4G
Size 12.4 x 59.2 x 9mm
Weight 132g
Battery 1,510 mAh

VERDICT: It's the most colourful iPhone to date, but it's identical to the iPhone 5.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Apple iPhone 5s

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £549 (16GB) £629 (32GB) £709 (64GB)

With fingerprint identity, 64-bit A7 64-bit chip delivers up to twice the perfomance of the iPhone 4 and 5c, many people will opt to pay the extra £80 or so over the 5c. They'll also get an improved camera with 15 per cent larger sensor and improved low-light capabilies. The True Tone flash incorporates two flashes each matched to different light temperatures so flesh tones are more natural with flash pictures.

OS iOS 7
Processor Dual-core 1.3GHz ARM V8
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 1136 x 640 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB, 32GB or 64GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 123.8 x 58.6 x 7.6mm
Weight 112g
Battery 1,560 mAh

VERDICT: The gold standard in user-friendly smartphones, with a ton of power to boot.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Apple iPhone 6

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £539

Calling it 'the best iPhone ever' almost seems a little redundant. Of course it's better - it's more powerful, has a better camera, and NFC could soon become a huge deal. We're not quite as keen on the aesthetics of it versus older iPhone designs, but it's still got a wonderful premium build and a beautifully sharp display. The option for greatly expanded storage sizes shouldn't be undervalued, either.

OS iOS8
Processor Apple A8 1.4GHz
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 1334 x 750 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/64GB/128GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 8MP iSight rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 138.1 x 67 x 6.9mm
Weight 129g
Battery 1,810 mAh

VERDICT: Bigger and better than ever, just as you'd expect. The definitive iPhone.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Apple iPhone 6 Plus

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £619

It's the iPhone 6, but bigger. That's the only difference, and it comes with all of the ups and downs that you would expect from a phablet. You'll either love or hate the larger screen which, whilst still beautiful, is slightly less sharp than its little brother's. Similarly it might be tough for smaller hands to hold. But then you do get to see more things on screen at once. It's still a remarkable phone though, make no mistake.

OS iOS8
Processor Apple A8 1.4GHz
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/64GB/128GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 8MP iSight rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 158.1 x 77.8 x 7.1mm
Weight 172g
Battery 1,810 mAh

VERDICT: A bigger iPhone 6 - it's really that simple. Prefer it or not, it's great regardless.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Archos 50 Helium

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £199

archos.com

If the Moto G and Moto E are the gold standard of entry-level and low-cost smartphones, then the 50 Helium is certainly worthy of silver. It's got a nice big screen as well as invaluable 4G capability. It won't set the world alight, but it's a standout in a market awash with cheap, limited handsets.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 145 x 71.5 x 8.95mm
Weight 160g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A capable alternative to the market-leading Moto G.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★½
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★½

BlackBerry Classic

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £330

uk.blackberry.com

BlackBerry diehards will love the modern touchscreen and keyboard – and even some actual apps, just like a proper smartphone. There are certainly worse handsets you could be issued at work. But there's nothing here to tempt an iPhone, Android or Windows user. For almost everyone other than BlackBerry fans, this phone is just a reminder of how far we've moved on in recent years.

OS BlackBerry OS 10.3.1
Processor Dual-core 1.5GHz Krait
Screen 3.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 8MP
Front camera 2MP
Video 1080p @ 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 131 x 72.4 x 10.2mm
Weight 177g
Battery 2,515 mAh

VERDICT: Difficult to recommend to all but the most ardent of BlackBerry fans.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

BlackBerry Passport

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £530
uk.blackberry.com

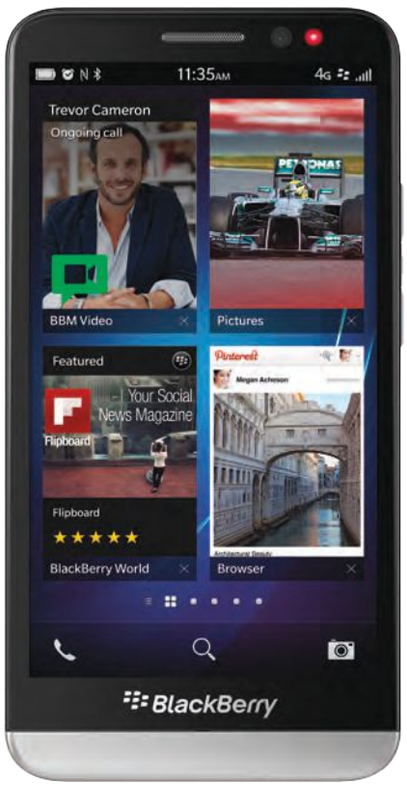
A premium device by anyone's standards - if you can look past the thoroughly odd design. Undeniably BlackBerry's most advanced device ever, it's still clearly angled towards the business crowd with a focus on productivity. The same old BlackBerry problems persist though, with an inferior OS and app store. It's just too impractical and limited for personal use.

OS BlackBerry 10.3
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 1440 x 1440 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 128 x 90.3 x 9.3mm
Weight 194g
Battery 3,450 mAh

VERDICT: Premium build and top specs are betrayed by off-putting, strange design.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★½
USABILITY ★★½☆☆
DESIGN ★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆



BlackBerry Z30

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £500
uk.blackberry.com

Perhaps if BlackBerry had focused on its efforts on making a phone like this five years ago we would be looking at a very different picture now. As it stands, a barren app store, odd features and a monster price tag may kill what could have been a competitive device. It's still surprisingly easy on the eyes though, and its display doesn't look too bad either.

OS BlackBerry 10
Processor 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-racing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 140.7 x 72 x 9.4
Weight 170g
Battery 2,880 mAh

VERDICT: Possibly the best BlackBerry yet, but that's not saying an awful lot.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★½☆☆
USABILITY ★★★½☆
DESIGN ★★★★☆

★★★½☆

BWC Stealth V2

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £300
www.bwcdevices.com

With good specs available at low prices there's never been a better time to pick up a rugged smartphone (if that's what you need). The Stealth V2 lives up to both the 'rugged' and 'smart' tags, with surprisingly capable insides. It also passed all of our stress tests, with countless drops, bashes and drownings failing to leave so much as a mark.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 854 x 480 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 1GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 133 x 69 x 20mm
Weight 230g
Battery 2,800 mAh

VERDICT: As smart and tough as it promises.

PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆
FEATURES ★★★½☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★½☆☆

★★★★☆

CAT B100

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £380
www.catphones.com

The CAT B100 withstands harsh conditions and jarring blows with a tough outer shell that absorbs the impact of falls, and impressive waterproofing. Beyond that, the phone lacks features games and apps - but chances are that's not why you're buying this phone. If you need a rugged handset to take adventuring, though, it's more than tough enough.

OS Nucleus 2.1
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 2.2 inches
Resolution 240 x 320 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 50MB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 3MP rear-facing, QVGA front-facing
Video QVGA
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 122.94 x 55.88 x 7.6mm
Weight 136g
Battery 1,150 mAh

VERDICT: Tough enough to take into a warzone, if a little light on actual function.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Doro 820 Mini

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £169
www.doro.co.uk

The Doro 820 Mini's software is simple to use; first-time smartphone users and the elderly won't get confused by any cumbersome on-screen options. Unfortunately, this usability has been hampered by hardware problems. A slow processor creates annoying delays when navigating through the phone, whilst a poor build quality ruins what could have otherwise been a decent budget phone.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, QVGA front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Size 125 x 69.5 x 14.95mm
Weight 170g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A rugged phone for those who need to rely on it in any environment.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Doro Liberto 810

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £145
www.doro.co.uk

The Liberto 810 has a comfortable design and a user interface that's ideal for first-time smartphone users and impaired customers. From there, things start to slip. The screen is buried into the handset, making it hard to accurately press smaller buttons, the camera software has some strange issues and we ran into a few bugs. It's a starting point for Doro, but it's hard to recommend it.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1GHz
Screen 3.9 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 500MB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP
Video 480p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 126 x 66 x 12.5mm
Weight 132g
Battery 1,500 mAh

VERDICT: Seniors may be demanding a tailored smartphone, but this isn't it.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★½☆☆

★★☆☆☆

Doro Liberto 820

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £186
www.doro.co.uk

It's easy to dismiss Doro phones as obsolete. This is to ignore that Doro isn't interested in attracting phone geeks and techno-fashionistas. These phones are for those value simplicity above processing power. Doro targets the 'senior' market But with its SOS button and useful short cuts the Liberto 820 will appeal to those are not slaves to trends in consumer electronics.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat with Doro Wizard
Processor 1.3Ghz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 940 x 560
Memory 1GB
Storage 4GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 13mm x 71mm
Weight 132g
Battery 1,900 mAh

VERDICT: A surprisingly well-featured phone for the more tech-savvy of seniors.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Doro PhoneEasy 624

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £100
www.doro.co.uk

The PhoneEasy 624 is Doro's best feature phone offering for those who want to keep things as simple, while making sure important contacts are only a button push away. It's got a 3G antenna, lengthy battery life, but a needlessly dire camera.

OS Custom
Processor N/A
Screen 2.4 inches
Resolution 320 x 240 pixels
Memory N/A
Storage N/A
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 2MP
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 102 x 52 x 19mm
Weight 104g
Battery 800 mAh

VERDICT: A well featured phone for the price if you're in the market for that sort of thing.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

EE Kestrel

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £99
www.doro.co.uk

The EE Kestrel is the best entry-level 4G handset on the market and this is in no small part due to Huawei. The manufacturer has built a solid handset that consumers will use beyond its 4G-LTE capability. Although, its weak resolution is a major flaw, it has plenty of other positive attributes including a smooth UI, the ability to handle a vast range of games and decent web and app browsing speeds.

OS Android 4.3 (Jelly Bean)
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G, 3G
Dimensions 131 x 65.3 x 7.85mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A reliable handset that boasts good usability, if underwhelming specs.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★½☆

★★★½☆

Google Nexus 6

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £499
www.google.com/nexus/6/

The Nexus 6 is a reminder of exactly what so many manufacturers are doing wrong by overly modifying Android. Google's flagship is a tremendous powerhouse - more of a media hub than a mere smartphone, and one of the best phablets on the market. Whether you'd rather it had a stylus is a matter of preference, though.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 2.7 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.96 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1440 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32/64GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 82.98mm x 159.26mm x 10.06mm
Weight 184g
Battery 3,220 mAh

VERDICT: Fast, fresh and tremendously powerful. A dream for Android purists.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★★

HTC Desire 816

Reviewed: October 2014, price: £300
www.htc.com/uk

In a market lacking a viable midrange phablet the HTC Desire 816 stands out. It might have its flaws, but for the price you can certainly look past them. If you can't, then a midrange device probably isn't for you. For the rest of us, there's no better option for getting your hands on a jumbo screen on the cheap.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.6GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1.5GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 156.6 x 78.7 x 7.9mm
Weight 165g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: A triumphant, large addition to a fantastic 2014 product line for HTC.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

HTC Desire 820

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £299
www.htc.com/uk

A large display, fantastic cameras and attractive design makes the HTC Desire 820 an ideal choice if you're after an affordable phone with plenty of features. It's only been let down by the fact that it doesn't pack an HD screen and that it doesn't run the latest Android software. It's also quite pricey compared to the OnePlus One; a phone that is a serious rival.

OS Android 4.4.2 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 1.5 GHz Cortex-A53
Screen 5.5-inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 8MP
Video 1080p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 157.7 x 78.7 x 7.7mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2600 mAh

VERDICT: Cheap, attractive and packed full of features.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

HTC Desire Eye

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £365
www.htc.com/uk

Whilst we love the cameras (having a front-facer as highly powered as the rear-facer is a huge boon, particularly for selfie-lovers) the Desire Eye's build quality and price make it a tougher sell than you might think. It does look nice though, and is an interesting concept. Just not a 100% successful one.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.3 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 13MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 151.7 x 73.8 x 8.5mm
Weight 154g
Battery 2,400 mAh

VERDICT: A hard sell when the superior One M8 can now be bought for the same price.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

HTC One M8

Reviewed: May 2014, price: £530
www.htc.com/uk

The HTC One M8 is, in all probability, the best smartphone ever made. It both looks and performs better than almost everything else out there. Features like Blinkfeed and knock-to-wake are a joy to use. If Apple, Sony and Samsung weren't paying attention before, they certainly are now.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB or 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 4MP UltraPixel rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146.36 x 70.6 x 9.35mm
Weight 160g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: If you can afford it, buy it. There's no better Android handset on the market.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

HTC One M9

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £580
www.htc.com/uk

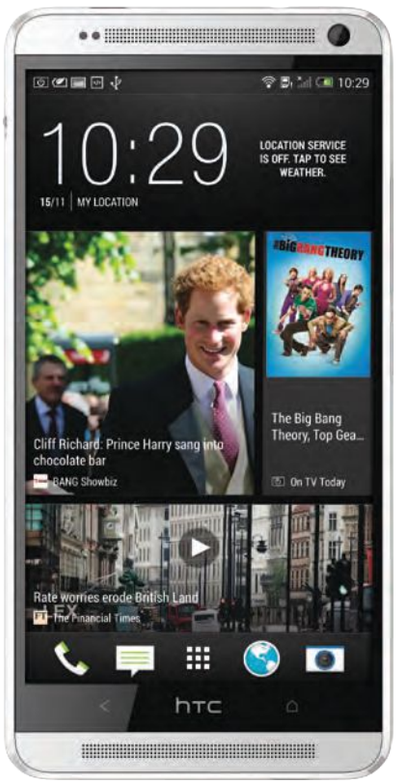
The One M9 is HTC's first major release of 2015 and its top-notch build quality, powerful processor and phenomenal battery life makes it one of our favourite phones of this year. However, it doesn't really provide anything different to what flagship rivals like the iPhone 6 already offers. Despite that, the HTC One M9 is still one of the best looking and most powerful phones on the market.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 4 x 2GHz + 4 x 1.5GHz octa-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 4MP UltraPixel front-facing
Video 4k
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144.6 x 69.7 x 9.61mm
Weight 157g
Battery 2,840 mAh

VERDICT: It has no unique selling point, but it's still one of the best devices out there.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★



HTC One Max

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £599

www.htc.com/uk

The HTC One Max piggybacks the reputation of the HTC One, although nothing much has improved. The high-quality display is present but HTC has failed to add processing power and the fingerprint sensor implementation is very disappointing.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.7GHz quad-core
Screen 5.9 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 16GB or 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 4MP UlatraPixel rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 164.5 x 82.5 x 10.3mm
Weight 217g
Battery 3,300 mAh

VERDICT: The HTC One's design is still a standout but there's nothing new here.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

HTC One Mini 2

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £360

www.htc.com/uk

Your opinion of the One Mini 2 will come down to what you mostly use your phone for. If you don't put too much strain on its struggling processor then you should be fine. It's got a magnificent pair of cameras, and that trademark HTC metal unibody build can't be beat. Day-to-day users will be more than satisfied - hardcore tech-heads should stick with the One M8.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1,280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 137.4 x 64 x 10.6mm
Weight 137g
Battery 2,110 mAh

VERDICT: Powered to match its stature, but still a very polished, attractive device.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★☆

Huawei Ascend G7

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £205

www.huaweidevice.co.uk

With a large screen and the gorgeous looks that remind us of the iPhone 6; the Huawei Ascend G7 might look good on the outside, but the software is another story. Huawei has redesigned Google's vanilla Android operating system and reskinned it as something that looks both cheap and ugly. Despite that, the Ascend G7 is a decent choice if you want an iPhone 6-lookalike that runs Android software.

OS Android 4.4.2 KitKat
Processor 1.2 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 153.5 x 77.3 x 7.6mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Its great performance is ruined cheap and ugly looking operating system.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Huawei Ascend P7

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £365
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

The Ascend P7 feels like a missed opportunity. Huawei should have put its full weight into creating a top-level flagship handset. However, its underpowered processor is its only real flaw. It looks premium, and its front-facing camera is the best on the market. Its price could be a sticking point, but it's by no means a bad device.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.8GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 139.8 x 68.8 x 6.5mm
Weight 124g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: It's not quite a market-leading flagship, but at least it looks the part.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★½☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Huawei P8

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £395
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

An attractive device that gives you top-of-the-range specs and a fantastic camera for half the price of the Samsung Galaxy S6 or iPhone. The performance isn't as slick as its major rivals, but that isn't a deal breaker. Especially when the phone costs half the price of the iPhone 6 and Samsung Galaxy S6.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 2 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16/64GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144 x 72 x 6.4mm
Weight 144g
Battery 2,680 mAh

VERDICT: Flagship specs for half the price of a Galaxy S6 or iPhone.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Huawei Honor 4x

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £144.99
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

An affordable phone that offers solid battery life and plenty of features. The build quality even feels better than the LG G4, a smartphone that costs double its recommended retail price. Honor isn't a big name over in the West, but phones like the 4X are helping it head in that direction. It's just a shame that the processor is a little on the weak side.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor HiSilicon Kirin 620
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 153 x 77 x 8.7mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: A solid phone at a bargain price, you'll be surprised at how good it looks.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Huawei Honor 6+

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £299.99
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

If you're after an affordable device with plenty of top-notch features, you can't really go wrong with the Huawei Honor 6+. The camera is unique, the performance is fantastic and battery life is better than more expensive phones. Its slow camera and inability to handle certain apps are only minor negatives - the Honor 6+ is well worth the money.

OS Android KitKat 4.4.2
Processor Kirin octo-core 925
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Camera Dual 8MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 151x 76 x 7.5mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,600 mAh

VERDICT: A flagship phone with excellent battery life that doesn't break the bank.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Kazam Tornado 348

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £247
www.kazam.mobi

Despite great looks and smooth performance, lack of 4G connectivity and storage makes the Tornado 348 something of a non-starter for serious users. The casual market will be plenty content with what's on offer here - particularly those eye-catching physical dimensions.

OS Android KitKat 4.4
Processor 1.7Ghz octa-core
Screen 4.8 inches
Resolution 1280x720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 139.8 x 67.5 x 5.15mm
Weight 95.5g
Battery 2,050 mAh

VERDICT: Standout design and performance at an attractive price.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★☆☆

Kazam Thunder Q4.5

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £TBC
www.kazam.mobi

The Thunder Q4.5 is a sure case of style over substance, but in the lower-cost end of the market you'd usually be lucky to get either. While the phone lacks standout features it won't let you down when it comes to everyday smartphone functionality. If you're in the market and want to try something new, you could certainly do an awful lot worse.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 854 x 480 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 1.74GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 136 x 64.6 x 8.9mm
Weight 137g
Battery 1,800 mAh

VERDICT: It may be flawed, but at this price point you'd be hard pushed to beat it.

PERFORMANCE	★★★½☆
FEATURES	★★½☆☆
USABILITY	★★★½☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★½☆

LG G3

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £499
www.lg.com/uk

Only minor detractions stop the LG G3 from being the perfect smartphone. That said, there's no such thing as the perfect smartphone just yet, so the G3 is still a wonderful piece of kit. It has outstanding features, hardware, and form to boot. The best display around, a monstrous processor and a variety of little touches all make the G3 is a special smartphone.

OS Android 4.4 (KitKat)
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches **Resolution** 1440 x 2560 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB or 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 2160p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146.3 x 74.6 x 8.9mm
Weight 149g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Want the best? The G3 is absolutely deserving of your consideration.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★½

★★★★★

LG G4

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £500
www.lg.com/uk

The unique leather design and incredible camera certainly helps the LG G4 stand out against rivals like the iPhone 6. However, the fact it doesn't have the strongest processor on the market, alongside an average battery and awkward button placement, means it doesn't really stand up as a true iPhone and Galaxy smasher.

OS Android 5.1 Lollipop
Processor 1.4GHz quad core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1440 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 149 x 76 x 9.8mm
Weight 155g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: A monster device let down by a weak processor. Not a Galaxy S6 killer.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★½☆

LG G Flex

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £570
www.lg.com/uk

The curved display may add very little, but with a state-of-the-art spec sheet and a fantastic display, the LG G Flex nails the basics of a high-end smartphone. However the £570 price and so-so camera make it difficult to recommend - at least when compared to its cheaper, better rivals. The Flex just isn't the innovation LG believe it to be.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 160.5 x 81.6 x 7.9mm
Weight 177g
Battery 3,500 mAh

VERDICT: A powerful phone held back by a steep price for an unnecessary gimmick.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★½☆

LG Spirit 4G

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £129.99
www.lg.com/uk

At only £129.99, there's little to criticise in this budget mid-range device that looks a lot like a shrunken down LG G4. It has enough performance for most users and comes with Android 5.0 right out of the box. The only problem is the weak front and rear cameras which distract from an otherwise competent package.

OS Android 5.1 Lollipop
Processor 1.3 Ghz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 133 x 66x 10mm
Weight 124g
Battery 2,100 mAh

VERDICT: A competent mid-range device with Android Lollipop and good specs.

PERFORMANCE ★★★½☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆
USABILITY ★★★★½
DESIGN ★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Motorola Moto E (2015)

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £109
www.motorola.co.uk

Paying £109 for a full-blown, powerful 4G smartphone is seriously good value for money. This value is only increased by a high-quality camera, powerful processor and excellent battery life. The only major faults we found when testing the phone included no LED camera flash, a plastic body that easily picks up marks and a fiddly SIM-card slot.

OS Android 5.0.2 Lollipop
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 410, 1.2 GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 540 X 960 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 640 x 480 front-facing
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 129.9 x 66.8mm, 146g
Weight 145g
Battery 2,390 mAh

VERDICT: After a smartphone that's seriously good value? This is for you.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Motorola Moto G

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £135
www.motorola.co.uk

The Moto G is a budget smartphone done right. It makes smart and sensible sacrifices to slash its price to a point that puts its rivals to shame. For people who don't demand the highest specs and best camera from a phone, the Moto G's easy-to-use system and fast speeds make it an ideal choice.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 129.9 x 65.9 x 11.6mm
Weight 143g
Battery 2,070 mAh

VERDICT: The best option for customers on a budget.

PERFORMANCE ★★★½☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Motorola Moto G (2014)

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £150

www.motorola.co.uk

It's an updated version of the Moto G - nothing more, nothing less. The lack of 4G is extremely disappointing, and a processor upgrade would have been nice. Still, a bigger screen, a better camera and microSD compatibility is extremely welcome. When it comes to affordable phones that can actually perform, the Moto G is still untouchable.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 141.5 x 70.7 x 11mm
Weight 149g
Battery 2,070 mAh

VERDICT: A solid improvement on the best, but no 4G gives it a limited shelf life.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Motorola Moto G 4G

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £150

www.motorola.co.uk

One of the best value smartphones on the market, the large display, 4G connectivity and latest Android operating software makes it well worth the price. Combine all of this with the phone's fantastic build quality and the Motorola Moto G 4G is well worth keeping after your contract expires.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor Quad-core 1.2 GHz Cortex-A53
Screen 5.0-inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8/16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 8MP
Front camera 2MP
Video 720p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 141.5 x 70.7 x 11mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2390 mAh

VERDICT: Priced between £200 - £400, this smartphone undermines the competition.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Motorola Moto X

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £380

www.motorola.co.uk

The Moto X is a rock-solid handset with unique, helpful features. This is the best place to experience Google Now, making voice operation genuinely useful. MIx in a sleek design, great camera and long battery life and the £380 price tag is justified. If you can afford the extra £150 then it makes for a sterling upper-mid tier upgrade to the Motorola Moto G.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 10MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 129.3 x 65.3 x 10.4mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,200 mAh

VERDICT: For those looking to step up from the budget tier: your search is over.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Motorola Moto X (2014)

Reviewed: January 2015, price: £420
www.motorola.co.uk

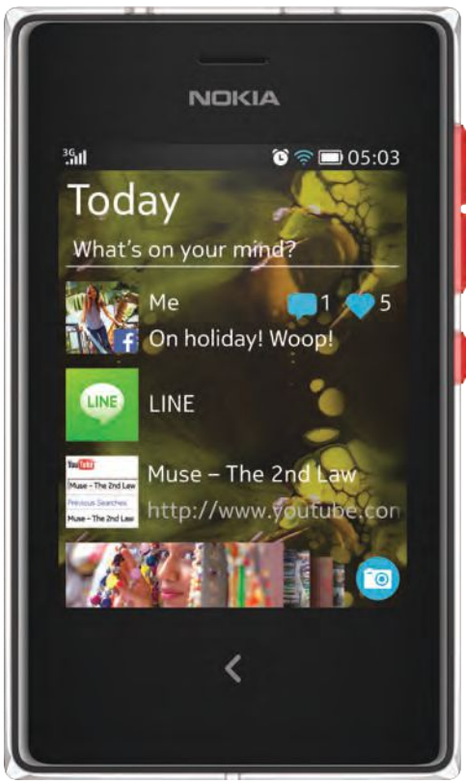
Motorola's original Moto X was a nice idea executed a little too late, especially in the UK. Competition from superior phones from manufacturers with a stronger recent track record was too great to overcome. But this latest version of the Moto X makes a much stronger case for your cash. It's got some excellent features and will surely be beloved by hardcore fans of stock Android.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1,080 x 1,920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 2160p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 140.8 x 72.4 x 10mm
Weight 144g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: The best Motorola ever, and arguably the best Android handset of 2014.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★



Nokia Asha 503

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £70
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Nokia's Asha 503 is a brilliantly tiny handset that stays usable despite the smaller screen. If you want a dirt-cheap phone then you might be better off with a sub-£50 handset and its design is a little spiky. But anyone looking for a phone to keep them busy for five minutes on a bus will find plenty to love here.

OS Nokia Asha platform 1.2
Processor N/A
Screen 3 inches
Resolution 240 x 320 pixels
Memory 128MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing
Video QVGA
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 102.6 x 60.6 x 12.7mm
Weight 110.2g
Battery 1,200 mAh

VERDICT: A good entry into the budget market that offers more than the basics.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Nokia Lumia 435

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £40
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

It won't shake the world but for 40 quid you can hardly expect it to. This is a very cheap phone that has all the features you would expect from more expensive handsets.While it doesn't excel in any particular area and the camera is pretty terrible, you'll be lucky if you find anything that performs this well for the price. A genuine bargain.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 800 x 480
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Cameras 2MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 480p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 118 x 65 x 11.7mm
Weight 131g
Battery 1,560 mAh

VERDICT: A bargain-bin handset that still manages to run Windows Phone very well.

PERFORMANCE	★★★½☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Nokia Lumia 625

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £180
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The sizeable 4.7-inch screen saves the 625 from its disappointingly short battery life and lack of HD viewing. It's plagued further by the Lumia range's other issues like a limited app store, but fights back with a decent camera. As a result it stands as a viable budget-range phone.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512 MB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G-LTE
Dimensions 133.3 x 72.3 x 9.2mm
Weight 159g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A decent budget smartphone with its fair share of shortcomings.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Nokia Lumia 640

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £109.99
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

It's incredible what Microsoft has managed to cram into such a cheap, inconspicuous phone. They've nailed all the major points internally, with a great camera, excellent battery and an adequate processor for the well-optimised Windows Phone OS. The only problem is Windows Phone itself, which still struggles to convince the sceptics.

OS Windows Phone 8.1 GDR2
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 141 x 72 x 8.8mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: A brilliant battery and solid performance make this a bargain device.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★½
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★½☆

★★★★☆

Nokia Lumia 640 XL

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £180
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Although it's more expensive than the 640, you get the advantage of a much bigger screen and some seriously good battery life. The camera has also gotten a bump too, producing some excellent images for this price-point. It's just a shame that the processor hasn't been improved to complement them.

OS Windows Phone 8.1 GDR2
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5.7 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 157.9 x 81.5 x 9mm
Weight 171g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Not a huge leap up but the camera and battery are worth the money.

PERFORMANCE	★★★½☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★½☆

★★★★☆

Nokia Lumia 735

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £299

www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Microsoft has produced a genuine rival to the bestselling Motorola Moto G in the form of the Lumia 735. With the introduction of an HD display and 4G LTE this is much more than just another selfie phone. But if selfies are what you're after the Lumia 735 offers plenty of fun ways to snap images of you and your friends with its 5-megapixel front camera.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 6.7MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 134.7 x 68.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 134g
Battery 2,200 mAh

VERDICT: A Windows Phone to match the Moto G, the 735 is a selfie star.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Nokia Lumia 830

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £267

www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The Nokia Lumia 830 is not quite the swan-song we were hoping for. It's not hugely affordable, and nor does the phone's hardware make full use of that 4G connectivity. Mid-range mobiles seldom convince us of their reason to exist and this final Nokia is no exception. It does look the part, and Cortana is improving, but there are simply better options out there.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 10MP rear-facing, 0.9MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 139.4 x 70.7 x 8.5mm
Weight 150g
Battery 2,200 mAh

VERDICT: Underpowered and overpriced, the Lumia 830 is average and forgettable.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Nokia Lumia 925

Reviewed: August 2013, price: £479

www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

With the Lumia 925 Nokia haven't set out to reinvent the wheel, they've just built on their past achievements to put together a brilliant phone. A gorgeous slimmed-down design, high performance camera and responsive user interface all set this handset apart from the rest of the Lumia range and make it a top level device in the high-end smartphone market. One of the best out there.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.5GHz dual-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution: 1280 x 760
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video: 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 129 x 70.6 x 8.5mm
Weight: 139g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A fantastic camera, slick design and great user interface make this top dog.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★½

★★★★★

Nokia Lumia 930

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £420
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The plus side for those looking for something different is that Windows Phone has come along enough now that its mere presence on a handset isn't enough to relegate it completely. The Lumia 930 is the flagship that the range has been crying out for for far too long now, and if you don't mind having a relatively restricted ecosystem then you should have very few issues with it.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 20MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 137 x 71 x 9.8mm
Weight 167g
Battery 2,420 mAh

VERDICT: The closest to rivalling Android and iOS that Windows Phone has ever come.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★★½

★★★★½

Nokia Lumia 1020

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £639.99
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The Lumia 1020 is an ideal smartphone for those of you who don't care about apps and it's perfect if you love to take great pictures. It might not be the slimmest device you can get your hands on but the 1020's powerful camera is well worth the extra bulk.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.5GHz dual-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution: 1280 x 760
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 41MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video: 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 130.4 x 71.4 x 10.4mm
Weight: 158g
Battery 2,000 mAh battery

VERDICT: A top smartphone with an astounding camera – one of the best.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Nokia Lumia 1320

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £280
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The Lumia 925 and 1020 were large enough, and the lack of software taking advantage of the big display, unlike with the Samsung Galaxy Note, means those extra inches just leave you looking faintly ridiculous when answering a call. You're better off spending your money on an Android phablet or Google's Nexus 5.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G-LTE
Dimensions 164.2 x 85.9 x 9.8mm
Weight 220g
Battery 3,400 mAh

VERDICT: A good phone, but the Nexus 5 simply undercuts the competition too well.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Nokia Lumia 1520

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £550
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Although the Nokia Lumia 1520 weighs in at a whopping £550 (SIM-free), it could cost you considerably more to purchase a standalone camera, camcorder, satnav, tablet and a laptop computer that can run Microsoft Office.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 20MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G-LTE
Dimensions 162.8 x 85.4 x 8.7mm
Weight 209g
Battery 3,200 mAh

VERDICT: A great all-in-one device that mashes the best of Nokia together.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

OnePlus One

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £269
www.oneplus.net

If you're not bothered about Samsung, Apple or any of the other big brand names, then we highly recommend the OnePlus One. It offers class-leading specs for half the price of an iPhone 6 or Samsung Galaxy S6. That attractive price is topped off by excellent build quality and unlimited customisation options.

OS Cyanogenmod version of Android 4.4
Processor 2.5Ghz quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 801
Screen 5.5 inches Gorilla Glass 3
Resolution 1920 x 1080
Memory 3GBRAM
Storage 64GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 5MP
Connectivity 4G, dual-band wi-fi, Bluetooth 4.0, NFC, GOS antenna
Video 1080 HD
Dimensions 152.9 x 75.9 x 8.9mm
Weight 162g
Battery 3100 mAh

VERDICT: A top-spec smartphone for half the price of the iPhone 6? Yes please!

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Prestigio MultiPhone 5430

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £190
www.prestigio.com

The Prestigio MultiPhone 5430 is a bland piece of kit that lacks any real highlights, but is undoubtedly a capable and efficient smartphone. Perhaps its best feature is that it gets the core experience right, if not groundbreakingly so. The very basics of what you expect from a smartphone in 2013 are here but there isn't much else.

OS Android 4.0 Ice Cream Sandwich
Processor Intel Atom 1.2GHz
Screen 4.3 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 126 x 64.7 x 10mm
Weight 140g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: Perfectly ordinary – but it's positioned as an everyday smartphone.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★½☆☆

Prestigio 4500 DUO

Reviewed: June 2013, price: £179

www.prestigio.com

The Prestigio fails to dazzle, offering nothing fresh, but it is a user friendly, well featured and well priced device that ticks all the right boxes for a smartphone. It offers a smooth Android experience in a classic design with a competitive price tag and could go up against the likes of Huawei or HTC's budget brands. A solid offering from a lesser known brand.

OS Android 2.3 Gingerbread
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 3.5 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 480p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 117 x 59 x 11mm
Weight 120g
Battery 1,850 mAh

VERDICT: Nothing new but this is a user friendly, well priced well featured device.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy A7

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £319.99

www.samsung.com/uk

The Samsung Galaxy A7 is an attractive proposition, But looks aren't everything. The cheaper £269 OnePlus One offers more power, a similar screen size and up-to-date software. And the £129 Vodafone Smart 4 Max with a bigger screen is less than half the price. If it's about power, not just looking powerful, perhaps look elsewhere.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.5GHz Quad-core
Screen 5.5-inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Camera 13MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 151 x 76.2 x 6.3mm
Weight 141g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: An attractive device, but it has less power than similar devices.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★½☆

Samsung Galaxy Ace 3

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £180

www.samsung.com/uk

The Samsung Galaxy Ace 3 is a good handset that's been made irrelevant by cheaper competition. Whilst it packs a vibrant display and solid specs, similar phones sit well below the £180 benchmark set here. Samsung will have to rethink its pricing. If it weren't for the Moto G's release this would be an emphatic recommendation - unfortunately Samsung will have to settle for the silver medal.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 121.2 x 62.7 x 9.8mm
Weight 115g
Battery 1,500 mAh

VERDICT: Premium build quality and visuals at a good price - just not a great one.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy K Zoom

Reviewed: October 2014, price: £400

www.samsung.com/uk

We can see what Samsung set out to achieve with the Galaxy K zoom, and creating a solid Android smartphone with an optical zoom is no small feat. However, it looks like a dated digital camera at best - newer devices are much more compact. If you're after a smartphone with a solid snapper, we'd advise you to seek out the LG G3 or Sony Xperia Z2 instead.

OS Android 4.4 (KitKat)
Processor Hexa-core: 1.3GHz quad-core + 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 4.8 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2MP front
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 137.5 x 70.8 x 16.6mm
Weight 200g
Battery 2,430 mAh

VERDICT: A decent smartphone and an excellent camera in a hideous body.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★☆☆☆☆

★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy Mega

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £440

www.samsung.com/uk

With a 6.3-inch screen, the Galaxy Mega falls into phablet territory, but that doesn't change the fact that said screen is hypnotically vibrant. As such, it's a great video player and has room for a sizeable battery. Its resolution, however, is a minor issue and it doesn't have enough internal storage to meet our needs. It will stick out like a sore thumb but you might just fall in love with it.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.7GHz quad-core
Screen 6.3 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.9MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 167.6 x 88 x 8mm
Weight 199g
Battery 3,200 mAh

VERDICT: For better or worse it's all about the big, vibrant screen with this handset.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Note 3

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £649

www.samsung.com/uk

The Note 3 steps over the competition with its large, engulfing display and great battery life. But it's the stylus that's the star of the show here, with great integration that makes it an ideal Note-keeping device. This makes it ideal for business people on the move, although they'll have to make sure they keep an eye on the easy-to-lose pen at all times.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5.7 inches
Resolution1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP front-facing, 2MP rear-facing
Video 4K
Dimensions 151.2 x 79.2 x 8.3mm
Weight 168g
Battery 3,200 mAh

VERDICT: A fantastic portable business device with helpful, unique features.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Note 4

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £498

www.samsung.com/uk

This year's effort ensures the Note remains top of the phablet pile, but unless you're particularly taken with the stylus and split-screen app combo, you shouldn't discount the latest flagship phones. The LG G3 and new Motorola Moto X are stunning devices, only slightly smaller in size and power. Unless you've got a thing for faux leather, that is, in which case the Note 4 is the best gadget ever made.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.7GHz quad-core
Screen 5.7 inches
Resolution 1,440 x 2,560-pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 3.7MP front-facing
Video 2160p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 153.5 x 78.6 x 8.5mm
Weight 176g
Battery 3,220 mAh

VERDICT: Still king of the phablets, but not by such a distance this time around.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Note Edge

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £610

www.samsung.com/uk

The Samsung Galaxy Note Edge points to an exciting future when we no longer have to accept that a smartphone screen has to be rectangular. As is often the case with a new technology, though, it needs more work. As cool as the edge looks, it serves little purpose, other than to make this a more expensive Note 4. Call us when the screen wraps all the way around, Samsung.

OS Android 4.4.4 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 2.7GHz Krait 450
Screen 5.6-inches
Resolution 1,600 x 2,560 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32/64GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 3.7MP front-facing
Video 4K @ 60fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 151.3 x 82.4 x 8.3mm
Weight 174g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: A worthwhile endeavour - for Samsung's engineers, not the consumer.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy S3

Reviewed: July 2012, price: £485

www.samsung.com/uk

Matching up to the mighty Galaxy S II was always going to be a tall order, but with the release of the Galaxy S III Samsung has clearly surpassed expectations. With its stunning design, amazing usability, high-powered performance and cutting-edge features, it measures up to the best of the competition and sets a new benchmark for its rivals. If you're looking for one of the best smartphones you can buy, this is it.

OS Android 4.0 Ice Cream Sandwich
Processor 1.4GHz ARM Cortex-A9
Screen 4.8 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.9MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Size 137 x 71 x 9mm
Weight 133g
Battery 2,100 mAh

VERDICT: A masterpiece of design and usability. This is the benchmark to beat.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★★

Samsung Galaxy S3 Mini

Reviewed: January 2013, price: £300

www.samsung.com/uk

Something of a misnomer, this is no relation to its bigger brother, the S III,despite the design similarities. The Mini is little more than a shrunk down Galaxy S II. If users want a budget Galaxy, they are better off pursuring that (former) flagship on a budget plan - this is extortionately expensive for what you get.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GHz RAM
Storage 8/16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions: 121.6 x 63 x 9.9mm
Weight 111.5g
Battery 1,500 mAh

VERDICT: A cheeky move by Samsung to pass this off as a premium device. It's not.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy S4

Reviewed: July 2012, price: £550

www.samsung.com/uk

An impressive hardware offering with intriguing new software and camera features but these need to be perfected and integrated into the device as a whole before the S4 can really be called a knock out. While the phone's processor seemed to struggle with games and the design is pretty similar to the S3, this is a solid offering from Samsung in the flagship race.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
CPU 1.6 GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Cameras 13MP front-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 136.6 x 69.8 x 7.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: An impressive offering with interesting but not integrated new software.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy S4 Active

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £400

www.samsung.com/uk

The Active S4 is ideal for people looking for a more protected smartphone, although it does make some sacrifices. Its design is too rugged for mainstream appeal and its display and camera aren't great. But it's a great hybrid for an underwater camera and is perfect for adventurous lifestyles.

OS Android 4.2.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.9 GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 139.7 x 71.3 x 9.1mm
Weight 151g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: It may not be quite as good as its big brother, but it certainly has its purpose.

PERFORMANCE	★★★½☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★½☆

Samsung Galaxy S5

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £530

www.samsung.com/uk

The thing about Galaxy handsets is that their flaws are often matters of personal opinion. If you don't mind the samey design, plasticky build and irksome user interface, then the Galaxy S5 could be the best smartphone going. It's insanely powerful, has a blinding display and is even waterproof. If you care about substance over style then the Galaxy S5 is as good as it gets.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.1 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 142mm x 72.5mm x 8.1mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,800 mAh

VERDICT: Behind a cheap-looking build lies the beastliest smartphone around.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★½☆

★★★★★

Samsung Galaxy S6 edge

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £760

www.samsung.com/uk

This is currently one of the best looking smartphones on the market. That dual-curved screen makes the iPhone 6 Plus and HTC One M9 look boring in comparison. An insanely fast camera and superb performance means that the Samsung Galaxy S6 edge isn't just about looks either.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor octa-core Samsung Exynos 7420
Screen 5.1-inches
Resolution 1,440 x 2,560
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 64GB/128GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Rear camera 16MP
Front camera 5MP
Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 142.11 x 70.1 x 7mm
Weight 132g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: A phone that grabs attention with both its looks and performance.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Sony Xperia L

Reviewed: August 2013, price: £249

www.sonymobile.com

This device includes some higher end specs for a low cost handset as well as a snappy camera, a high quality screen and impressive battery life. However, the odd design choices are a distraction and the screen does suffer from lag issues. Lower cost devices like the Nokia 620 offer more at a cheaper price. Access to the Google Play store potentially gives it an edge over the 620, if that's what you're after.

Dimensions 128.7x 65 x 9.7mm, 137g
Display 4.3 inch, TFT capacitive touchscreen, 480x854 pixels, 228 ppi
OS Android 4.1
CPU Qualcomm MSM8230 Snapdragon dual core 1GHz
GPU Adreno 305
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB, microSD up to 32GB
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n
Camera 8MP, autofocus, LED flash
Battery Up to 9 hours (3G) - accurate

VERDICT: Not a bad choice for gamers on a budget, but for others there are better handsets.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆

Sony Xperia SP

Reviewed: July 2013, price: £290

www.sonymobile.com

The Xperia SP has an excellent high definition screen, a fairly solid battery life and an interesting notification system involving a panel at the bottom of the phone which lights up with customisable colours when you get a message. However the phone's not as powerful as last year's flagships, is slightly bulky and there are rival phones to be had for less money, particularly if you're not fussed about 4G.

OS Android 4.1
Screen 4.6inch / 720x1280 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Camera 8MP, VGA front
Video Record / Playback
Audio Music player / Stereo Bluetooth / 3.5mm jack
Memory 8GB expandable via micro SD card
Battery 2370 mAh

VERDICT: If 4G LTE isn't for you, the Xperia SP isn't quite the bargain it first seems.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Sony Xperia T3

Reviewed: July 2013, price: £290

www.sonymobile.com

If it weren't for the existence of the Sony Xperia T2 Ultra, released less than nine months prior, the T3 would be a solid recommendation. It's a highly satisfactory smartphone with a premium build - but without anybody who would really need to buy it.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 1.4GHz quad-core
Screen 5.3 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.1MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 150.7 x 77 x 7mm
Weight 148g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: A solid effort makes it a viable mid-range phablet choice.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★½☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★½

★★★★☆

Sony Xperia Z1

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £475

www.sonymobile.com

It's a little on the large side, but Sony's latest handset is rock solid, with powerful hardware and a unique design. Fans of the company will be right at home with the software that stores movies, music and games you've bought across other platforms. Add in a great camera and you've got a phone that stops just short of best in class.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Snapdragon 800 quad-core 2.2GHz
Screen 1080 x 1920 pixels, 5 inches
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB expandable up to 64GB via micro SD
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Wireless Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports micro SD, microUSB
Battery 3000 mAh
Dimensions 144 x 74 x 8.5mm
Weight 170g

VERDICT: Software makes it great for Sony fans, hardware makes it good for the rest

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★½

Sony Xperia Z1 Compact

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £449

www.sonymobile.com

If you hate giant displays and don't have the patience for Apple's iOS and its restrictive App Store, the Sony Xperia Z1 Compact your only choice, and a great one at that. Sony have done well to make a phone with the power to rival the mighty iPhone in an equally small package. In-built Sony-branded apps such as Walkman and PlayStation is an inherent plus, too. Fingers crossed for a KitKat 4.4 upgrade soon.

OS Android 4.3
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 800
Screen 4.3-inch HD Triluminos
Resolution 720 x 1,280 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 16GB, expandable to 64GB
Camera 20.7MP Exmor RS
Video 720p
Connectivity Wi-Fi, 3G, 4G, Bluetooth 4.0, NFC
Dimensions 127 x 64.9 x 9.5mm
Weight 137g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: The most powerful, best looking compact Android available. Simple.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★★

Sony Xperia Z2

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £579

www.sonymobile.com

The Z2 matches its rivals' power and usability. A lack of design innovation and similar specs might deter Z1 owners from upgrading, though, and the large size might not appeal to fans of smaller devices. That said, superior imaging and a powerful processor and CPU means it excels in the right places.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146.8 x 73.3 x 8.2mm
Weight 163g
Battery 3,200 mAh

VERDICT: An immaculate smartphone, if only a small step up from its predecessor.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★½

Sony Xperia Z3

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £549

www.sonymobile.com

We were all a little bit surprised when Sony elected to release a new flagship a matter of months after the Xperia Z2 hit shelves. After reviewing it though, the company's reasoning is obvious. The Z3 is a true flagship as worthy of your attention (and cash) as any other in this Buyer's Guide. The Z3 has premium design, hugely powerful internals and an array of neat features. A very impressive device.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1,920 x 1,080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing
Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146 x 72 x 7.3mm
Weight 152g
Battery 3,100 mAh

VERDICT: Sony's best full-sized offering yet, although the camera is aging a little now.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Sony Xperia Z3 Compact

Reviewed: December 14, price: £429

www.sonymobile.com

The Xperia Z3 Compact is indisputably the most powerful compact Android ever made. We can't really slight it for anything, and no other Android phone in its size bracket can come close to matching it. It's remarkable that Sony has managed to squeeze almost the exact same technology from the Z3 into a smaller body. Finally, Android power-users have a valid option in the sub-five inch display category.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 4.6 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing
Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 127 x 64.9 x 8.6mm
Weight 129g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: The definitive small-sized Android smartphone. The most powerful yet.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Vodafone Smart 4 Max

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £129.99

www.vodafone.co.uk

If you crave a 6-inch 4G phablet for the equivalent of £2.50 a week over a year the Smart 4 Max is the only game in town. Purists will sneer at its elderly processor, low-res screen and lack of "Lollipop". You'll be the one with around £400 more in your bank account. Just bear in mind it can only connect to Vodafone 4G network and you can't remove the Vodafone embedded software.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor Snapdragon MSM8926
Screen 6-inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 13MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 164 x 83.4 x 7.9mm
Weight 170g
Battery 3,800 mAh

VERDICT: A great prices makes this worthwhile for first-time buyers.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆

Vodafone Smart 4 Power

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £79

www.vodafone.co.uk

The benchmark scores of a £79 phone were never going to impress anyone: the Smart 4 Power is not a handset for playing the latest taxing games on. That said, it's enough to deliver on the advantages of 4G. If instant information rather than instant gratification is what you're after, this phone delivers for the price.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 141 x 71.4 x 9.5mm
Weight 162g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Poor specs distract from what is an ergonomic and capable 4G starter.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Vodafone Smart Ultra 6

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £125

www.vodafone.co.uk

Packing a fast processor, excellent screen and plenty of battery life, you'll be hard-pressed to find a rival phone which offers quite this much for the money. Even the camera is pretty good, offering full manual controls and a high megapixel count. If you're after a true bargain Android device and are happy to forgo the big brands, this is well worth a look.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 1.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 154 x 77 x 8.4mm
Weight 159g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Excellent specs and great battery life make this seriously good value.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Yezz Andy A5

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £207

www.sayyezz.com

Camera phone fans on a tight budget should definitely seek out the Andy A5 for its affordable price and high-quality camera. If taking photos is not that important to you then you'll probably have seen the uninspired design and bland features a million times before.

OS Android 4.2 (Jelly Bean)
Processor Quad-core 1.2GHz
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Connectivity 3G, wi-fi
Dimensions 144.1 x 73.5 x 8.6mm
Weight 106g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A great camera, but the rest struggles against more bullish counterparts.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★½☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆

YotaPhone 2

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £549

www.yotaphone.com/gb-en/

The YotaPhone 2 fixes almost all of the original's flaws, and turns the rear E Ink display from an impractical cherry on top, to one of the phone's main ingredients. There's no denying this quirky conversation-starter is for a niche audience, and a rich one at that. We can't wait to see what the YotaPhone 3 will bring - not least a price drop for this model.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 2.3GHz Krait 400
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1,080 x 1,920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144 x 69.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: If you're constantly reading on the go this is the best new smartphone in years.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

ZTE Blade Vec 4G

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £153
www.ztedevices.co.uk

Once you've fixed all the software customisations present on the Vec 4G, you're left with a pretty respectable performer for the price. The large, sharp display does a great job of quickly rendering web pages over 4G, Unfortunately, the Vec 4G battery's small capacity and demanding hardware mean you'll often find the phone emptied by the end of the day. It also has storage issues - namely no SD card slot.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 142.3 x 70.4 x 7.8mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: Solid specs for 4G at a reasonable price, but there are better options out there.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

ZTE Blade V

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £99.99
www.ztedevices.co.uk

A fantastic price makes the ZTE Blade V easy to recommend for first-time buyers. Anyone hoping to get the most out of a smartphone's apps and snaps should look elsewhere, but if you don't want to worry about a phone for the kids being broken or stolen, then this is your guy.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor Snapdragon S4 Play
Screen 480 x 800, 4 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
Camera 5MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 126 x 64 x 10.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 1,800 mAh

VERDICT: A great prices makes this worthwhile for first-time buyers.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

ZTE Blade S6

Reviewed: August 2015 price: £169.99
www.ztedevices.co.uk

The ZTE Blade S6 is definitely more than just a cheap iPhone 6 rip off. A decent camera helps it stand out from the rest of the mid-range crowd, whilst performance is surprisingly decent for a phone of this price. It's let down by poor build quality and software that lacks certain features. The price is the most attractive, however, and those negatives shouldn't put you off this decent mid-range phone.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor Snapdragon 615
Screen 5-inches
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Camera 13MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144 x 70.7 x 7.7mm
Weight 154g
Battery 2,400 mAh

VERDICT: An affordable phone with surprisingly decent performance.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Amazon Kindle Fire HD 8.9"

Reviewed: May 2013, price: £229/259

www.amazon.co.uk

A good looking e-reader with tablet capabilities, limited by Amazon's annoying operating system and app eco-system, and an annoyingly slow browser. This device will doubtless be a commercial success, with its branding and ease of use, but for the more serious user there are much better tablets out there.

Dimensions 240 x 164 x 8.8mm
OS Customized Android 4.0
Screen 8.9 inch IPS LCD capacitive touchscreen
Resolution 1920 x 1200, 254 ppi
Processor TI OMAP 4470 dual-core 1.5 GHz Cortex-A9
GPU PowerVR SGX544
RAM 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
Cameras front facing 1.3MP with 720p video
Wireless 802.11 a/b/g/n, dual-band
Ports USB 2.0, 3.5mm audio jacks, Bluetooth A2DP
Battery life 10 hours (accurate)

VERDICT: A solid, functional tablet which is limited by its Amazon associations.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Acer Iconia Tab 8

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £140

www.amazon.co.uk

Acer has managed to do what manufacturers of every cheap tablet should aspire to: create a tablet that is priced extremely competitively, but which performs to a standard much higher than you'd expect for its cost. A few compromises have been made along the way, but this is still a budget slab that's well worth considering.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 800 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity Wi-fi only
Dimensions 215 x 130 x 8.5mm
Weight 360g
Battery 4,600 mAh

VERDICT: It has a few flaws, but for less than £150 you should look past them.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★½☆

Advent Vega Tegra Note 7

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £140

www.nvidia.co.uk

It's a contender, alright. Aside from some clunky desing issues, the Advent Vega Tegra Note 7 is a powerful and punchy little machine. If you're after a compact and affordable tablet its speed sets it aside from its rivals as a device that's great for gaming, customising images and browsing the web.

OS Android Jelly Bean 4.3
Processor Nvidia Tegra 4
Screen 7 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Connectivity Wi-fi, Bluetooth 4.0
Dimensions 119 x 199 x 9.6mm
Weight 320g
Battery 8 hours

VERDICT: Its speed sets it apart from its competition. A cheap and capable device.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★½☆

Amazon Kindle Fire HDX

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £199-329
www.amazon.co.uk/kindle

The Kindle Fire HDX is around £100 more than the Fire but the improved screen and processor justifies the extra cost. The real human Help feature will be a boon to tablet newbies; experienced users will regard it as a gimmick. The HDX is a top-rate device – but if you're not a regular Amazon customer you're better off with a Nexus.

OS Amazon customised Android OS, v4.1.2
PROCESSOR Snapdragon 800 2.2GHz quad-core
SCREEN 1902 x 1200 pixels, 7 inches
MEMORY 2GB RAM
STORAGE 16GB, 32GB, 64GB versions available
CAMERA 8MP front-facing
VIDEO 720HD
WIRELESS Wi-fi (optional Vodafone 4G version)
PORTS microUSB
DIMENSIONS 131.8 x 66.9 x 9.9mm
WEIGHT 302g

VERDICT: A significant update to the Fire and ideal for Amazon users.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Apple iPad Mini

Reviewed: December 2012, price: £269
www.apple.com/uk

The iPad Mini represents Apple playing it safe, which is to say: disappointing. This is little more than an iPad 2, with all its limitations - a low res screen and weak processor power - shrunk down to an odd 7.9-inch size. It is also overpriced, the Google Nexus 7 offers superior performance for £100 less. Despite its luxurious design, you really are paying for little more than 4G support, and Apple's App Store. Average.

OS iOS 6.0.1
Screen 7.9-inch LED-backlit IPS LCD
Resolution 768 x 1024 pixels at 162 pixels per inch
Input Capacitive touchscreen
CPU Apple A5 1GHz dual core
GPU PowerVR SGX543MP2
Memory 512MB
Storage 16/32/64GB
Camera 5MP rear facing, 1.2MP front facing
Video 1920x1080 (1080P HD) at 30fps. Video stabilised
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n, dual-band, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports 3.5mm audio jack, Apple Lightning port (USB 2.0)
Size 200 x 134.7 x 7.2mm
Weight 308g

VERDICT: Little more than a shrunken iPad 2 with 4G. Disappointing.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Apple iPad 3

Reviewed: April 2012, price: £399
www.apple.com/uk

The new iPad boasts the highest-resolution display of any tablet, as well as an improved 5MP camera and better connectivity. Not to mention a high-powered new processor which makes it the most powerful iPad ever, too. Though some may resist the upgrade path, the unrivalled Retina display is a subtle but deeply appealing feature which will become more and more desirable. The new iPad is by far the best tablet around

OS iOS 5
Screen 9.7-inch TFT
Resolution 1536 x 2048 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Processor 1GHz Cortex-A9
Memory 1GB
Storage 16/32/64GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Flash No
Video 1080p HD
Wireless 802.11a/b/g/n Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports 3.5mm audio jack, proprietary Apple connector
Standby time 720 hours
Use time 9 hours
Size 241 x 186 x 9mm
Weight 662g

VERDICT: There's simply no contest - the new iPad is the best tablet in the world.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Apple iPad 4

Reviewed: January 2013, price: £399

www.apple.com/uk

A rather cheeky move by Apple to release the iPad 4 (or 'iPad with Retina Display') just months after the iPad 3. All it really adds is a new processor (the iPhone 5's A6X) and Apple's new lightning connector. However, this means it remains as the best tablet money can buy - and Apple's App Store and its 300,000 dedicated tablet apps only make the proposition more enticing.

OS iOS 6.0.1,
Screen 9.7 inch LED
Resolution 1536 x 2048 pixels at 264 ppi pixel density
CPU Apple A6X, Dual-core
GPU PowerVR SGX554MP4,
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB storage
Camera 5MP rear facing, 1.2MP front facing
Video 1080P HD at 30fps
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n, Bluetooth 4.0
Cellular 4G, 3G, 2G
Ports Lightning Connector (USB2.0) and 3.5mm audio jack,
Dimensions 241.2 x 185.7 x 9.4mm
Weight 662 g

VERDICT: The best tablet money can buy.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★★

Archos 79 Platinum

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £150

www.archos.com

With so many budget tablets to choose from the Archos 79 Platinum has no features or unique selling points to attract the consumer in a saturated market. Its hardware is woefully underpowered, its features are bog standard and it is at least £10 too expensive. Its attractive looks are not enough to redeem it. The bottom line is that it should have never been conceived.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Quad-core A9 1.6GHz
Screen 7.85 inches
Resolution 1024 x 768 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 2MP rear-facing
Connectivity Wi-fi, Bluetooth
Dimensions 201 x 137 x 8mm
Weight 366g
Battery Lithium Polymer

VERDICT: There is no reason you ever would, or should, buy it. Avoid, avoid, avoid.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★☆☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★½☆☆☆

Archos 101 XS 2

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250

www.archos.com

A couple of years ago, the 101 XS would have had us singing Archos' praises, but by today's standards its processing power and screen quality fall short. It might, though, find a home with users limited to spending £250 on a 10-inch tablet

OS Android 4.2.2
SCREEN 10.1-inch/1,280 x 800 pixels
CAMERA 2MP rear, 2MP front
VIDEO Record/playback
AUDIO Music player/3.5mm jack
MEMORY 16GB expandable via microSD
DIMENSIONS 273 x 169 x 10.1mm (tablet), 273 x 169 x 5mm (keyboard)
WEIGHT 636g (tablet), 200g (keyboard)

VERDICT: A great price is let down by a poor screen and cheap build.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Asus Transformer Pad TF701T

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £429
www.asus.com

The Asus Transformer Pad TF701T packs a beautiful screen and the keyboard dock is well thought out. But dated software and the threat of a Google Nexus 10 sequel make this a niche device. Do you really need a keyboard? The iPad mini begs to differ.

OS Android 4.3 (via an over-the-air update)
SCREEN 10.1 inch/2,560 x 1,600 pixels
INPUT Capacitive touchscreen
CAMERA 5MP rear, 1.2MP front
VIDEO Record/playback
AUDIO Music player/3.5mm jack
MEMORY 32/64GB
BATTERY Tablet 31Wh, dock 16Wh

VERDICT: It packs fast hardware but can't compete with the iPad Air or Nexus range

PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★☆
USABILITY ★★★☆☆
DESIGN ★★★☆☆

★★★★☆

Google Nexus 9

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £319
www.google.co.uk/nexus

The Google Nexus 9 is an impressive and welcome return to the tablet market for HTC, and a jewel of a gadget for Android 5.0 to debut on. The size is right, and if you know for sure you want an Android tablet, it's your best bet - it's certainly the best slate HTC has ever made - but for the money we'd still go for the quality build and thriving eco-system of an iPad.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Screen 8.9-inch
Resolution 2048 x 1536 pixels
Processor Tegra K1 2.3GHz
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB internal
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.6MP front-facing
Flash No
Video 1080p HD
Dimensions 153.68mm x 228.25mm x 7.95mm
Weight 425g
Battery 6,700 mAh

VERDICT: The best tablet on the market - if you insist on Android, that is.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★☆
USABILITY ★★★★☆
DESIGN ★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Google Nexus 10

Reviewed: February 2013, price: £319
www.google.co.uk/nexus

Finally, the Android tablet everyone's been waiting for - except Apple. This is a tablet that can go head to head with the best in the Apple iPad stable - it has a powerful processor, a Retina Display quality screen, the latest version of Android. Along with the Nexus 7, this is the best tablet Android users can buy. The only flaws are an uninspired body, and a dearth of tablet specific apps.

OS Android 4.2 (Jelly Bean)
Dimensions 263.9 x 177.6 x 8.9mm, 603g
Screen 10 inch
Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels
Input Super PLS TFT capacitive touch-screen
CPU Exynos 5, Dual-core ARM Cortex-A15
RAM 2GB
Cameras 5MP (main), 1.9MP (front)
Wireless Wi-Fi, Bluetooth
NFC Android Beam
Storage 16GB/32GB
Connectivity Micro USB, Micro HDMI, 3.5mm headphone jack
Battery 9,000 mAh

VERDICT: The best Android tablet of 2013 slips behind the iPad only due to apps.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★☆
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★☆

★★★★★

HP Slate 7

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £125

www.hp.com

The steel frame makes the Slate 7 an impressive sight and its audio uses Beats technology to great effect. The fantastic price will help it to undercut some of its rivals, though the slow processor and low quality camera keep it from besting them elsewhere.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor Dual-core 1.6 GHz Cortex-A9
Screen 600 x 1024 pixels, 7.0 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB expandable to 32GB via SD card
Camera 3.15MP pixel rear facing, VGA front facing
Video 720p
Dimensions 197.1 x 116.1 x 10.7mm
Weight 372 g
Battery non-removable, 5h media time

VERDICT: Great audio and build, but corners have been cut to keep costs down.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★½☆☆

Lenovo ThinkPad 8

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £424

www.lenovo.com

If you just want a device for general tasks then you can find better alternatives within Lenovo's Yoga range of Android slates, and elsewhere. If you're a fan of Windows and in search of a bulkier device that offers plenty of productivity tools, then the ThinkPad is an (almost) viable option.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 2.4GHz quad-core
Screen 8.3 inches
Resolution 1200 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 8.83 x 5.2 x 0.35 inches
Weight 439g

VERDICT: Even with so few Windows tablets available the ThinkPad still fails to stand out.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★½☆☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★☆☆

Lenovo Miix 2

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £255

www.microsoft.com/surface

With solid performance across the board, frequently usable built-in apps and compact size the Miix 2 is a small but surprisingly versatile slate. Despite the limitations that come with the Windows OS, it performs general tasks well and, for the price, won't let you down. With 3G capability you can even connect to the internet on the move. Overall, it offers plenty of pleasant surprises to combat the weaknesses of its OS.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8 inches
Resolution 1280 x 800 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 8.3 x 215.6 x 131mm
Weight 350g
Battery 4,730 mAh

VERDICT: A small but substantial Windows offering that still trails its Android rivals.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★½☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★½☆

Lenovo Yoga Tablet 2

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £249
www.lenovo.com

Lenovo certainly deserves credit for trying to break the 'black slab' mould. It's an interesting attempt at something different, but unless you have a real need to hang it up from the ceiling or to perch it upright on a train table every day its mediocre internals and display don't represent that much value for money.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.86GHz quad-core
Screen 10.1inches
Resolution 1920 x 1200 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.6MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G optional
Dimensions 255 x 183 x 7.2mm
Weight 619g
Battery 9,600 mAh

VERDICT: A nice idea, but one we don't fully buy into. Not quite up to scratch.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★★☆☆

Microsoft Surface 2 Pro

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £720
www.microsoft.com/surface

We can't fault Microsoft's ambition for the powerful Surface Pro 2 to become your all-in-one portable work and play device. It's got a great display and solid hardware but a lack of dedicated apps, software compromises and stiff - cheaper - competition make it a tough sell.

OS Windows 8.1
Screen 10.6 inches/1920 x 1080 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Camera 720p resolution front and rear
Video Record/playback
Audio Music player/3.5mm jack
Memory 64GB/128GB/256GB/512GB
Battery 48Wh

VERDICT: Price holds back what is an otherwise excellent work/play hybrid.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Microsoft Surface Pro 3

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £640
www.microsoft.com/surface

From software to hardware and even design, the Surface Pro 3 is a wonderful piece of kit. It's refreshing to come across a tablet with grander ideals than the norm, challenging us to rethink the notion of the medium. For most people this could genuinely replace their laptop. It's just a shame, and an almost inexcusable mistake, that the keyboard which is so integral to its function is sold as an expensive extra.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 1.5GHz Intel core i3/2.9GHz Intel core i5/3.7GHz Intel core i7
Screen 12 inches
Resolution 2160 x 1440 pixels
Memory 4GB/8GB RAM
Storage 64GB/128GB/256GB/512GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity Wi-fi only
Dimensions 292.1mm x 201.4mm x 9.1mm
Weight 800g
Battery 42Wh

VERDICT: The first tablet with enough function to conceivably replace a laptop.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★½☆
DESIGN	★★★★½

★★★★★

Nokia Lumia 2520

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £399

www.nokia.com

The Windows-run Lumia 2520 is a decent first effort from Nokia - and it's certainly one of the more attractive and solid pieces of tablet hardware on the market. It has a few issues with the weight and a lackluster camera but overall we have no trouble recommending this to Windows 8.1 and Lumia fans.

OS Windows 8.1
Screen 10.1 inches, 1920 x 1080 pixels, 218PPI
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 800
Memory 2GB
Camera 6.7MP with Carl Zeiss lens
Audio Music player/3.5mm jack
Dimensions 168 x 267 x 8.9mm, 615g
Battery 8120 mAh

VERDICT: A rock-solid first effort from Nokia in this market with powerful specs.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 Kids

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250

www.nokia.com

The Tab 3 Kids is surprisingly robust, with a solid camera, great battery, fantastic educational apps and software to suit kids. But the premium design doesn't feel like it was meant to be enjoyed by young users and we'd suggest going with a company that specialises in the market rather than one that's testing it out.

OS Android 4.1
Processor Dual-core 1.2GHz
Screen 600 x 1024 pixels, 7 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB, expandable up to 64GB
Camera 3.15MP (back), 1.3MP (front)
Video 720p@30fps
Wireless WiFi, Bluetooth 3.0
Ports micro-USB, microSD
Dimensions 188 x 111.1 x 9.9mm
Weight 306g
Battery Li-Ion 4,000 mAh

VERDICT: A little too premium for the market it's aimed at.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★★☆☆

Samsung Galaxy Tab S

Reviewed: October 2014, price: £319

www.samsung.com/uk

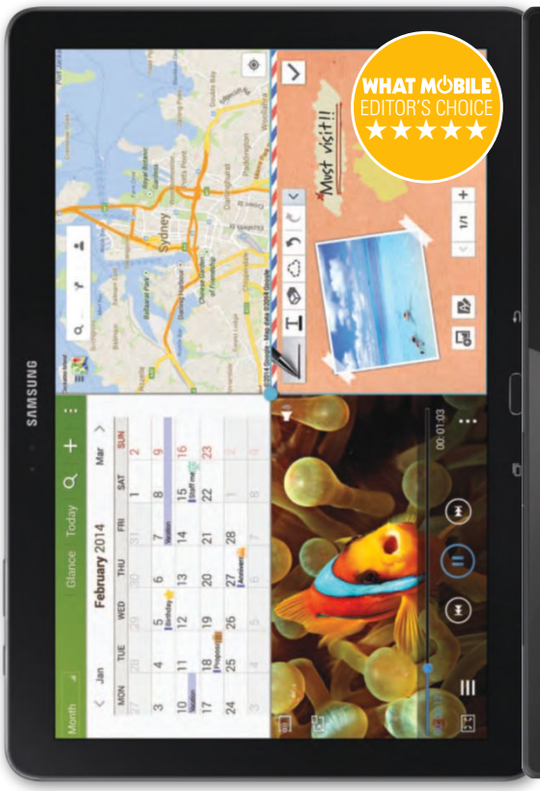
While the Tab S may not be a radical departure from other Android tablets, it encompasses everything that is great about a top-notch Samsung product. It's enough to rebuild the Korean giant's brand image, and proof that the company can still surprise us with a fantastic all-round product.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8.4 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB, 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 125.6 x 212.8 x 6.6mm
Weight 294g
Battery 4,900 mAh

VERDICT: Simply put, it's the best Android tablet on the market.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★½
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy Note Pro 12.2

Reviewed: May 2014, price: £649

www.samsung.com/uk

One of the biggest displays ever seen on a tablet - at no detriment to quality. Combine that with solid design and a super powerful processor to run loads of unique applications and the NotePRO 12.2 is arguably the best tablet on the market. It's certainly the best Android slate, although it's definitely priced as such.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor Octa-core (1.9GHz + 1.3GHz quad)
Screen 12.2 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB/64GB
Camera 8MP rear/2MP front-facing
Video 1,080p Full HD
Connectivity Wi-fi only
Dimensions 295.6 x 204 x 7.95mm
Weight 750g
Battery 9,500 mAh

VERDICT: Big, beautiful, functional and priced to match. Android's finest.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★½
FEATURES	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★½

Sony Xperia Z2 Tablet

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £399

www.sony.co.uk

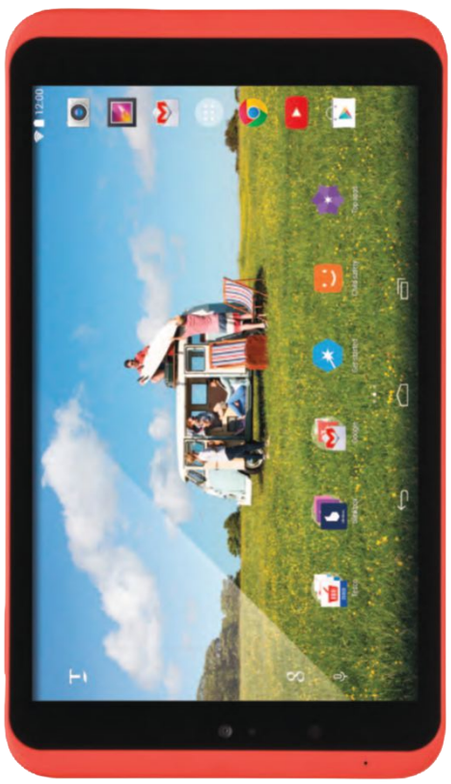
If looks could kill, Sony murdered the competition. Add to that a powerful processor and decent screen size and you have a great new addition to the high-end tablet market. Innovative features like dust and water resistance are impressive too, and manage to make up the expensive price tag.

OS Android OS v4.4.2 (KitKat)
Screen 10.1 inches
Processor Quad-core 2.3 GHz
Memory 3GB
Storage 16GB, microSD up to 64GB
Camera 8.1MP rear, 2.2MP front
Battery 6,000 mAh
Network Wi-fi connectivity, 4G LTE

VERDICT: A good all-round tablet, with looks that set it apart from the rest of the flagships.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★½
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★

★★★★½



Tesco Hudl 2

Reviewed: January 2015, price: £129

www.tesco.com/direct/hudl

This is no Tesco Value attempt at a tablet. Make no mistake, the Hudl 2 is a fantastic Android slate that's great value for money. Sure, it's not on the cutting edge like Google's Nexus series of devices, but if all you want is a gadget to casually surf the web, watch some films or read a few comics, this device is every bit as capable as an iPad Mini.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.83GHz quad-core
Screen 8.3 inches
Resolution 1,920 x 1,200 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 720p at 30fps
Connectivity Wi-fi
Dimensions 224 x 128 x 9mm
Weight 410g
Battery 4,900 mAh

VERDICT: Don't be fooled - Tesco is now a serious contender in the tablet space.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Toshiba Excite Pure

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250
www.toshiba.co.uk

The Toshiba Excite Pure's £250 price is attractive but its display is far too faded. It means apps and the like don't look very good. It might appeal to families looking for a cheap way to keep the kids entertained but little else. Even so, the slow processor and useless apps force us to recommend you look elsewhere.

OS Android v4.2 (Jelly Bean)
Processor Nvidia Tegra 3
Memory 1GB
Storage 16GB
Screen 1280 x 800 pixels, 10.1 inches
Video HD
Audio Stereo
Dimensions 261.6 x 177.8 x 10.2mm

VERDICT: It's got a cheap price tag but the poor display and tech shows why.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★☆☆☆
USABILITY	★★☆☆☆
DESIGN	★★☆☆☆

★★☆☆☆

Vodafone Smart Tab 4G

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £125
www.vodafone.co.uk

Attractive, cheap and feature-packed; the Vodafone Smart Tab 4G looks more upmarket than its affordable £125 pricing suggests. It's let down by a slow processor, but that shouldn't put you off what is basically well-designed and ideal family tablet.

OS Android KitKat 4.4
Processor 1.2 GHz Quad-Core
Screen 8.0-inches
Resolution 1280 x 800-pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Rear camera 5MP
Front camera 2MP
Connectivity GSM/EDGE/3G/4G/HSPA+/LTE
Dimensions 209 x 128 x 7.99mm
Weight 309g
Battery 4060 mAh

VERDICT: An affordable and easy-to-use tablet that offers something for everyone.

PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
USABILITY	★★★★☆
DESIGN	★★★★☆

★★★★☆

Vodafone Smart Tab 6

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £150
www.vodafone.co.uk

The Smart Tab 6 is deinitely cheap but we'd suggest looking elsewhere for a good budget tablet. The screen isn't that great and performance can't quite keep up with more intensive tasks and games. It has a large battery and the build quality is definitely better than the price suggests, but these points aren't enough to redeem what is an average tablet at best.

OS Android 5.0.2 Lollipop
Processor Quad-core 1.3GHz
Screen 1280 x 800 pixels, 9.6 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB, expandable up to 32GB
Camera 5MP rear camera, 2MP front camera
Video 720p
Wireless WiFi, Bluetooth 4.1
Ports micro-USB, microSD
Dimensions 146 x 244 x 7.9mm
Weight 406g
Battery Li-Ion 4,600 mAh

VERDICT: Cheap but not quite good enough to worry the competiton.

PERFORMANCE	★★☆☆☆
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
USABILITY	★★☆☆☆
DESIGN	★★★☆☆

★★½☆☆

Asus ZenWatch

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £204
www.asus.com/uk/

The Asus ZenWatch is handsome enough, but fails to stand out from the crowd of Android Wear devices. Google's wearable OS still feels like a solution in search of a problem - unless you have a specific use in mind for its features you may want to hold out for the next generation of deviecs.

VERDICT: Attractive, but with too many caveats to recommend outright.

Fitbit Flex

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £79.99
www.fitbit.com

Minor niggles aside, the Fitbit Flex is possibly the best fitness wearable on the market. Its features are so diverse, and its app so beautiful and intuitive, that it can be tailored to just about anyone's lifestyle. With interchangeable bands in a variety of colours, and a low price, the Flex is practically a must-buy.

VERDICT: A fantastic companion app and great functionality put the Flex on top.

LG G Watch R

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £180.00
www.jawbone.com

The LG G Watch R may be one of the most mature-looking smartwatches yet, but not everyone will find it attractive – or appreciate Android Wear's limitations. The market's set to explode with the advent of the Apple Watch and the Pebble Time. Unless you're desperate for what the LG G Watch R does right now, it's hard to see the value in yet another second-generation Android Wear watch.

VERDICT: Although attractive, it has limited functionality compared to other smartwatches.

Nike+ Fuelband SE

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £89

www.nike.com

The Nike+ FuelBand SE is close to being the perfect sports tracker. It's social capabilities combined with its numerous features to keep you motivated ensure that it will be a permanent mainstay in any gym addicts kit bag. You might not be so keen on wearing it every single day, though, with its appealing design being more clearly tailored to a casual setting. Plus, its lack of waterproofing could be a deal-breaker for some.

VERDICT: When it comes to fitness, Nike is a name you can trust - this is no exception.

★★★★☆

Samsung Galaxy Gear 2

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £250

www.samsung.com

The design needs a rethink but the Samsung Galaxy Gear 2 provides decent fitness tracking features and a good music player. Trimming down on other functions, however, would have made for a slimmer and sleeker product. It would be unfair to say this is a needless addition as it packs a lot of functions, but it's an expensive product that's hindered by an impractical design and redundant features.

VERDICT: A decent effort that has since been eclipsed by superior Android Wear devices.

★★★☆☆

Sony Smartband SWR10

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £80

www.sony.com

A mishmash of features means that the SWR10 occupies an odd space in the wearable tech world. But at least it is a space all of its own. No similar device can offer you all of the features of the SWR10, though that's irrelevant if those features don't suit your needs. On the plus side, a large number of the SWR10's drawbacks are with its partner app, and apps can always be improved.

VERDICT: Potential to be a serious contender, but a hard sell for most in its current state.

★★★☆☆

Wearable compatibility guide

LG
G Watch R

Pebble
Watch

Samsung
Gear Live

Sony
Smartwatch 3

Garmin
Vivofit

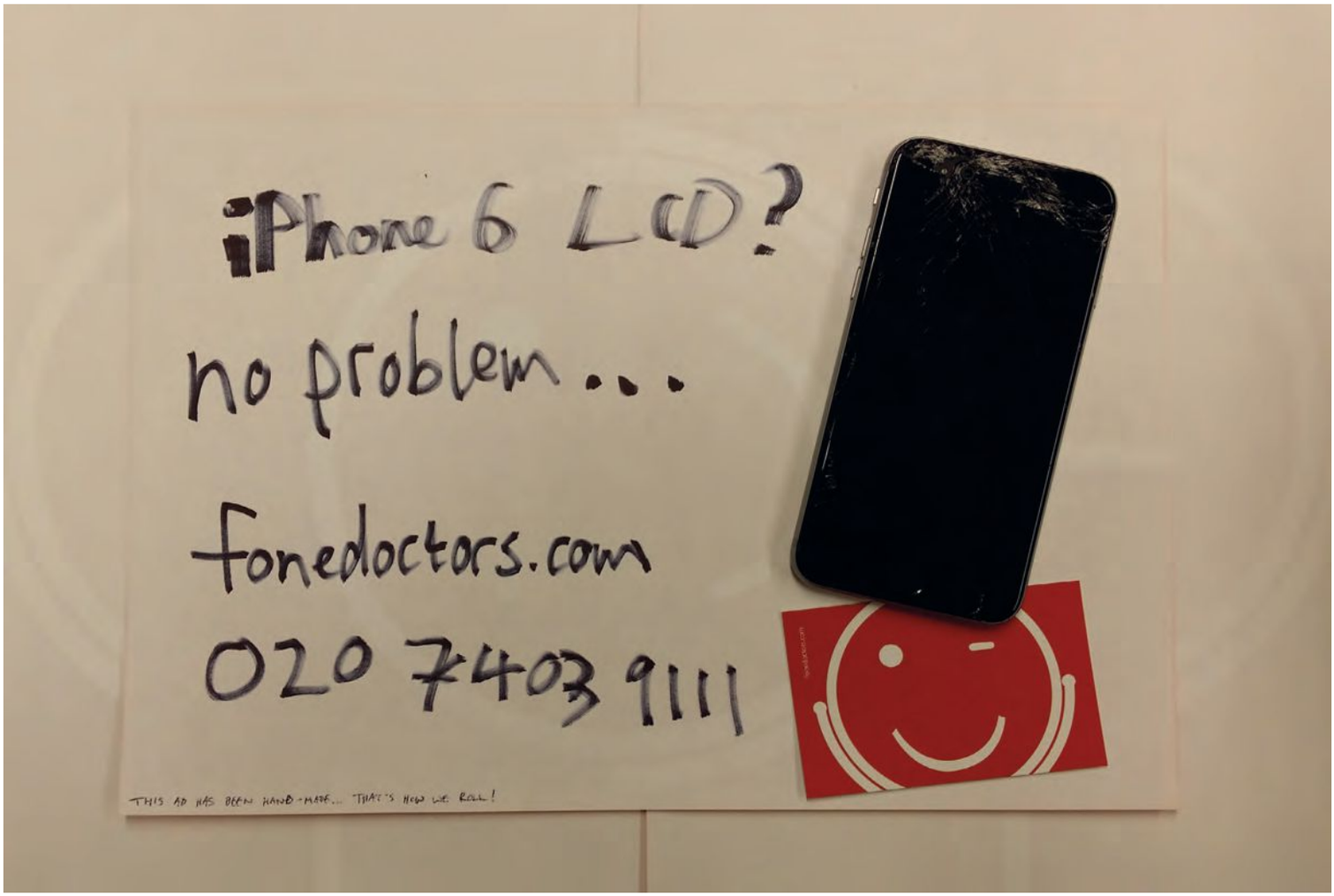
Archos
Activity Tracker

iPhone
6 / 6 plus

HTC
One M8

Samsung
Galaxy S5

Sony Xperia
Z3 / Z3 Compact



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